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**FIFTY
YEARS
OF
PROGRESS**

1900 - 1950



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Fifty years of progress
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To. Les & Helen.

From. Ed & tract.

FIFTY YEARS OF PROGRESS

*Chiefly the story of
The Pioneers of the
Watson District from
1900 — 1910*

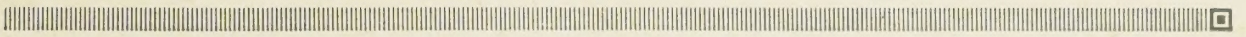
Edited by: Ben Putnam
G. H. Sproule
V. F. Zoboski
T. J. Gormican

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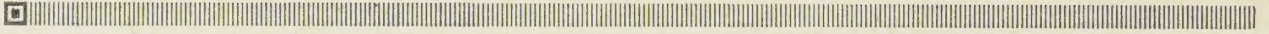
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Dedicated

to Our Pioneers

the men and women
who blazed the trail.



in *Acknowledgment*

Our sincere thanks to our typists, Mary Ryan and Mrs. Elma Zacharias, to the many contributors who cooperated so wonderfully in supplying the contents of this book.

FOREWORD

In the spring of 1950, when Joe Wolch, president of the Watson Board of Trade, appointed a committee to gather data and compile material for a history of the pioneer days of the Watson district it appeared to be comparatively easy. The carrying out of the task proved a much bigger undertaking than even the most enthusiastic of us had even dreamed. Especially does this apply to a committee without experience or training in the art of book making. Many times the easiest way out would have been to drop the whole matter and forget about it. However, that was not the spirit that motivated the pioneers who settled the Watson district. The splendid cooperation your committee received from the early settlers themselves has made this book possible. Our greatest handicap has been the lack of trained personnel to do research work.

Since some early settlers are missing from among our pioneers, therefore information was not available to write their biographies.

We have tried to avoid publishing anything that might cause embarrassment to any person. Should anyone take offence to anything contained in these pages, certainly none was intended.

There are incidents recorded here we hope will bring a smile. There are others that may cause the shedding of a tear.

We heard much of the hardships of the early years. Were they hardships? Certainly not in the minds of the pioneers themselves. Many in writing for this publication refer to the early days as "the best years of our lives and our happiest days." It would seem that the pioneers looked upon the obstacles of those days as something to be faced; they were problems in which, in the strength of manhood and womanhood, they gloried and were glad to go forth and meet.

1950 seemed a good time to take stock and set down in writing, for the benefit of posterity something about who the people were that blazed the trail, how they lived, of the part they played in the development of the district and what the country was like during the early stages of development. The old timers are moving away and fading from the scene. The longer this work is delayed the more difficult it will be to get an authentic picture.

On a work of this nature a certain amount of repetition is unavoidable. We hope you will enjoy this book.

Committee: Ben Putnam
G. H. Sproule
V. F. Zoboski
T. J. Gormican.



INTRODUCTION

In laying the ground work for a history of this kind, it seems advisable to go back to those years prior to the turn of the century and to get a word picture of what the country was like before white people had commenced to settle here.

The Big Quill Plains, where the scene of our story is laid, lies about two hundred and twenty miles north of the international boundary and about one hundred and twenty five miles west of the Manitoba border.

The name Quill Plains was derived from the myriads of water fowl that congregated here, made their nests and raised their young. This sight must have impressed the travellers that crossed these plains during the last twenty five years of the nineteenth century.

The country while level, slopes gently from the north-west to south-east and drains into the Big Quill Lake. There are those who believe that the prairie country lying south of the town of Watson was once, in ages past covered with water and a part of the Big Quill Lake. The soil varies considerably, but is mostly a black loam with clay subsoil. Roughly speaking the land south of the C. N.R. line was mostly prairie and that part north park lands, some heavily wooded with poplar and willow. To get the picture we spoke of in the beginning we must rely partly on what writers have written in books and special articles and draw upon the imagination for the rest because before 1900 no one had stopped on these plains long enough to build a house or plant a garden.

For more than a hundred years the Hudson Bay Company and other traders had established posts along the Saskatchewan River and made their settlements. Fur, especially beaver, was the great commodity of wealth; and exploiting the Indians was the chief vocation of the white people who used the river as a thoroughfare. It was easy then to live off the country. Buffalo, deer, wild fowl and fish were in abundance.

From 1880 on, conditions changed rapidly in what is now Saskatchewan. Agriculture in Manitoba was becoming an established fact. In 1883 the C.P.R. was pushing its line across the continent to the western coast. Settlement was moving west and farming was being tried as far west as the Indian Head district. Ranchers had established themselves in the Qu'Appelle Valley. The big plains remained mostly untouched by the plow. The buffalo disappeared in the early eighties.

In the spring of 1885, General Middleton marched his army north from Qu'Appelle and crossed the Big Quill Plains via Humboldt on his way to put down the Indian uprising on the Saskatchewan river. As tragic as this unfortunate affair was, it undoubtedly hastened the settlement of the country. Many of the young men who marched with General Middleton at the time of the Riel Rebellion were from England and Eastern Canada. Some decided there was a future in Saskatchewan and remained when the

army returned east.

A small group called the Temperance Colony settled in 1882, where Saskatoon now stands.

The Barr Colonists, organized and financed in England, unloaded their belongings at Moose Jaw, moved north and pitched their tents on the opposite side of the river from where the Temperance Colony was located. Later on most of these colonists took up land in western Saskatchewan.

There is evidence and every reason to believe that wagon trains and travellers crossed the Quill Plains back and forth freighting expeditions from Winnipeg to the settlements along the Saskatchewan River during this period.

During the last years of the 19th century free land in the north western states was mostly all taken up. Western Canada was being heralded as the "Last Great West." Cheap land was the lure. If the railroads were to extend their lines and prosper, there must be people in the country. The Canadian Government, now realizing that the west would be settled, pushed their surveys as rapidly as possible. The Government and the steamship lines and railroads all united to bring prospective settlers to the west. Not long after 1900 this campaign commenced to bear fruit, slowly at first and then thousands came, the magnet "Free Land" was taking effect. Always some came ahead of the railways. Towns and villages mushroomed almost overnight along the new railway lines. Hotels, stores, implement shops, banks, livery barns and the grain elevators were built as soon as some crop seemed to be in sight. There were boom days, times of high hopes and sometimes bitter disappointment. It was the opening of a new country with all the travail, the joys and sorrows that followed in its wake.



A. E. Gregory's first homestead residence

It is not surprising that the rich soil, the abundance of grass and verdant flora attracted the land hungry people to the Big Quill Plains. Those who came first speak of flowing water in every ravine. Besides, there was timber within easy reach, wood for fuel and logs suitable for temporary buildings. Those who came first, the advance guard, wondered the first year or two if they would ever have neighbors, if after all the country would be settled. Then they came faster and faster and in a few months homestead shacks dotted the landscape. The early settlers speak about the buffalo trails that led from the southeast to the northeast. There is no doubt that part of the great herds of this splendid species used the Quill Plains as feeding grounds on their migration and there is also little doubt that some of the last great slaughters took place here. Every farmer that broke the prairie sod had the experience of plowing under the bones of these noble beasts. They were shot and left to rot on the prairie with perhaps their hides taken and only the tongues used for food.

The first settlers to the Watson District were not sure where the railroad might be built. There were those who picked their homesteads thinking they had selected a place about where a town was likely to be located. It seems the corner, around where the town of Watson now is, was first recognized as Iron Springs Creek. The creek is still here. Some springs, during a heavy snow run off, it is almost a river, other times at the close of a dry summer it is a dry valley. Where the name Iron Springs comes from is not clear, perhaps some one decided that the springs arising north of town where the C. N. R. get their water supply was full of iron. Anyway this creek winds its way to the southeast and empties into the Big Quill Lake some fourteen or fifteen miles from town.

When the coming of the railroad became a fact many of the homesteaders found employment on the construction crews and thus supplemented their cash income, which from their farms was almost nil at that time.

Before the railroad the country Post Office was named Vossen. The town Watson was named after a Senator Watson.

1904 brought the C. N. Railway and this changed the lives of the people already here and brought an influx of new settlers that populated the district. All this called for schools and many other improvements that a progressive community demands. The village of Watson soon became a town and took its place as one of the good small towns in this part of the province and has so continued down through the years.



Homestead days of T. J. Gormican

THE HOMESTEADER

Wind-swept and fire-swept and swept with bitter rain,
This was the world I came to when I came across the sea —
Sun-drenched and painting, a pregnant, waiting plain
Calling out to humankind, calling out to me:

Leafy lanes and gentle skies and little fields all green,
This was the world I came from when I fared across the sea —
The mansion and the village and the farmhouse in between,
Never any room for more, never room for me:

I've fought the wind and braved it; I cringe to it no more;
I've fought the creeping fire back and cheered to see it die.
I've shut the bitter rain outside and, safe within my door,
Laughed to think I feared a thing not so strong as I!

I mind the long, white road that ran between the hedgerows neat,
In that little, strange old world I left behind me long ago,
I mind the air so full of bells at evening, far and sweet —
All and all for someone else — I had to leave to go!

It cost a tear to leave it — but here across the sea
With miles and miles of unused sky, and miles of unturned loam,
And miles of room for someone else, and miles of room for me,
I've found a bigger meaning for the little word called "Home".

AMONG THE PIONEERS 1900 — 1910

W. F. BATES

Among the first settlers in the district east of Watson was Mr. W. F. Bates and his two brothers, Art and Earl. After selecting their homestead in 1902 they moved in from Wisconsin in 1903 with their effects and broke the first land in the township. There were no roads but he points out there were many old buffalo trails which ran in a general direction from southwest to northeast; no doubt on their migrations the buffalo trekked into the edge of the park belt from the open prairie country farther south and west. He also writes that near him was the remains of an old telegraph line that had run to Prince Albert. They were able to make use of this for fencing and other purposes.

Mr. Wm. Sketchley, who settled a few miles South East of the Bates Brothers hauled his seed grain in from Yorkton and had the distinction of shipping the first car of grain from Quill Lake in 1904. Mr. Bates gives Mr. Sketchley considerable credit in improving the live-stock of the district through his breeding of Percheron horses and Short Horn cattle. Perhaps it was a coincidence but Mr. Bates relates that Wm. Sketchley died the same day that he was preparing the material for this article, December 10, 1950, at the age of eighty nine years.

Mr. Bates also mentions Mr. Chaddock and Mr. A. F. Jones as early settlers. In 1902 or 1903 Mr. Jones brought much prairie land under cultivation and was a successful farmer. He was one of the very first to introduce sheep raising in the Quill Lake district.

Mr. Bates states that their school was started in 1906 and their first teacher was Miss Mabel Chappel, and a very good teacher too.

Church services were held quite regularly during the summer months in the Bates home until the school was built. The Sunday school was supervised by Mrs. W. F. Bates.

Mr. Bates points out that Mr. J. Hufnagel was the first merchant in the town of Watson, he refers to Mr. Hufnagel as an honest, upright man who always had the best interest of the community at heart. While his store was small he stocked a good supply of the things the settlers required. Mr. Hufnagel's assistant in the store was Frank J. Vossen, always courteous and obliging and anxious to assist the customers.

Mr. Bates states it was a great boost to the district when T. F. Schindler opened a hardware and lumber business, he also pays a splendid tribute to Mr. Schindler as a business man and citizen.

Mr. Bates doesn't write much about his own undertakings, however, we can state that Mr. and Mrs. Bates played an important part in the development of their community. Like most of the homesteaders they started

with log buildings and eventually constructed modern frame farm buildings. The Bates' had the misfortune to have a fine barn destroyed by fire some time in the 20s. It may not be generally known that, when a young man, Wes Bates tried his hand in the deep south, down on the Gulf Coast. The year of the Chicago World's Fair, 1903, seemed like a good time to grow melons and ship them north to the World's Fair market. Mr. Bates grew the melons alright and had a few cars in transit when a tie up of some sort occurred on the railroads and the melons were shoved on a side track and there they rotted. Melons, being a very perishable fruit, didn't require many days of Arkansas and Louisiana summer weather to do the trick. Mr. Bates carried on farming and ranching on his homestead for many years. He was recognized as one of the best stock feeders in the district. He took an active part in the Watson Agricultural Society and served as director for many years. He was always active in the organized farm movement and served in many official capacities. W. T. Bates served as Reeve of Lakeside Municipality for several terms. Mr. and Mrs. Bates raised a family of three sons and several daughters. They retired from active farming several years ago and moved to the town of Quill Lake where Mrs. Bates died only this year, 1950. Their youngest son, Clifford Bates, carries on farming on the land his father homesteaded forty years ago.

S. H. FAIRBANKS

Mr. S. H. (Steve) Fairbanks, a native of Nova Scotia, came west as a young man and in January, 1905, filed on the land that for many years remained his home. Mr. Fairbanks filed for his homestead sight unseen through a Mr. Haycock who was a part owner of what is now the King George Hotel. He was fortunate as his quarter section proved to be one of the choice quarters of the neighbourhood. Mr. Fairbanks arrived at Watson that same year on April 20th with a car of settlers effects and moved to his farm about seven miles north and west. He writes that with some help he put up a log shack 12 x 16. That same spring he broke up twenty acres of prairie and seeded it in crop by June 5th.

Mr. Fairbanks mentions some of the early settlers that he first knew. Among them are: Frank J. Vossen, who was postmaster, Peter Dawson, Mr. and Mrs. Wilkes, Joe and Louis Walby, John and Sebastian Sommer, Mr. and Mrs. Behiels, the Spaberg family, Mrs. Hetland, W. T. Smart, the Bartsch Brothers, and others.

Mr. Fairbanks points out that F. J. Vossen and Peter McNab have been the only postmasters Watson has had down through the years. Steve continued to bring his land under cultivation year by year.

He writes that in 1910 with six oxen he broke the prairie on the quarter section where the Dafoe Airport buildings were constructed during the second world war.

Mr. Fairbanks refers to the frequent frosts that plagued the early settlers when the varieties of grain then available refused to mature, and in later years wheat raising became successful.

On Sept. 1924, S. H. Fairbanks married Patricia Josephine Brydon at Watson. Mrs. Fairbanks had served as a nurse with the Allied Armies overseas during the first world war.

Mr. and Mrs. Fairbanks developed one of the fine farmsteads north west of Watson. They took an active part in community affairs. Mr. Fairbanks served as school trustee for Iron Springs School, took a deep interest in the farm movement and served in various official capacities. He was quite successful in the growing of registered grains and grasses.

In 1947, the Fairbanks sold their entire holdings of three quarter sections of land and moved to Victoria, B.C. where they continue to reside.

THE GREGORY BROS. ALVIN E. AND GORDON

We will print their story of the early days as they have written it but will add a few facts concerning their years in the district that, through modesty perhaps, they have failed to relate.

About 1911 Alvin E. Gregory with others organized and built a flour and feed mill at Watson which Mr. Gregory continued to operate for several years. The low grade of wheat too often prevalent those years didn't tend to make local flour milling very successful. Later on this building was taken over by the Watson Local of the Old Grain Growers Association and used as a store by that organization. A. E. Gregory acted as manager for this store for a period. Mr. Gregory was local shipping manager for the Co-operative Live Stock Shipping Association for a number of years.

Mr. Gregory moved with his family to Vancouver soon after the first World War where according to reports he has been engaged in a successful business.

Mr. Alvin E. Gregory, 4451 John Street, Vancouver, B.C. writes:

After reading remarks written by brother Gordon, re early homestead days I would add that bringing Mother in from Yorkton in September 1903 (the railway at that time was as far as Sheho, but still under construction and we could not get any freight shipped over it) we had a heavy load and the roads were very bad, lots of sloughs and creeks to cross, with mud and plenty deep. We had to leave part of our load on the side of the

road and later went back for it and found it untouched. It took us ten days to get to the homestead, arriving on the twenty fourth of September, 1903. On November 4, 1903 we moved from the tent to our log cabin 20 ft. by 20 ft. The only lumber used was for the floor and doors. This was hauled from Yorkton and the window frames and sash from Rosthern. The roof was poles covered with old sacking on which we put a layer of clay, made up as plaster. This smoothed the roof and over this we laid tar paper and covered with loose earth, this gave real service for a good number of years, being warm and dry.

We had many interesting trips to Sheho for supplies, mostly grain for horses used on the grading at Iron Springs Creek, later known as Watson.

On one occasion, on coming back from Quill Lake, where we had to go to the land office, the water in the Iron Spring Creek was so high the horses had to swim and the wagon box floated off, taking the front bolster with the king bolt. I landed hanging on the lines and with the front wheels of the wagon. However, we rescued the box and back wheels and re-assembled them and got on our way, all in the day's work.

Every depression was a pot hole or slough. Around Watson, it seemed just one string of sloughs with a little brush around the edges.

In 1904, I was appointed Government Land-Guide and we had quite a number of land seekers at our place and of course we had to feed them. For meat they got mostly rabbits and some of them would call for a second helping of that "Chicken". We also were able to get ducks and prairie chickens which helped out.

Mother was responsible for the post office being named Natika and I was the first postmaster. I believe J. C. Guittard had the mail contract once a week from Watson to Natika and Bogend (Later LeRoy).

By the end of 1905, Watson was growing. In the spring, Mrs. A. Gordon and her son Jack, built a shack to live in while locating a homestead but she was so bothered with travellers for meals and sleeping accommodations that she started giving meals and added a bunk house with straw ticks. They were glad to get anything to sleep on. This start is what gave her the idea to build the restaurant on Main Street on rear of corner lot Railway and Main. This was a busy place during the early construction days.

In July, Mrs. Gordon was joined by her daughters, Mrs. A. B. Salter, Edna, Meryl and Anne. I married Anne in 1906 and this was the first Protestant wedding in Watson.

As I remember J. H. Wilkes had a lumber yard; Joe Hufnagel, a general store, Tom Robinson, groceries, Tom and Harold Schindler, lumber, Hay

cock and Haywood, hotel, Vossen and Bettin, farm implements, Frank Vossen, postmaster, Joe Mercer, drug store, J. C. Guittard, livery and feed stable, Mr. Spring, harness shop and a feed barn. The butcher shop, I think was run by a Mr. Krell (I am not sure of this now). Later it was taken over by Harry Peterman.

Stritzel General Store was later known as Stritzel and Spaberg (Pete). John Sommer was the Massey-Harris Agent. White and Son had a livery stable and real estate. Pete Sullivan dray, Mr. Depew, real estate, W. Postlewaite, operator of the Western Canada Elevator. In the winter of 1906 and 1907, Jack W. Gordon and myself built a farm machine warehouse and office on the corner of Railway and Main Street and took over the Massey-Harris Agency. A branch of the Canadian Bank of Commerce was opened in the sample room of the King George Hotel. Later this was moved to a small building on Main Street and I believe in 1907 the Bank was built at the present location.

In the fall of 1906, J. C. Guittard's livery barn was burnt and several horses with it, but was later rebuilt.

Gordon Gregory continued on the farm where the Gregorys homesteaded for many years southwest of Watson, near what is now the Leroy district. Gordon was an active community worker and usually had a hand in helping along any enterprize, be it business, social or sports that appeared for the good of the community. He was always active in the farm movement and served as Wheat Pool delegate for his sub-district for several years. Gordon Gregory with his sons established a herd of Holstein cattle that had attained quite a creditable stage when they disposed of their farm effects in 1942. During his later years in the district Mr. Gregory went into fur ranching and developed some fine specimens of the Black and Silver Fox of various strains. They moved their foundation stock of foxes with them when moving to British Columbia and are still engaged in breeding fancy fur bearing foxes so far as we are aware.

GORDON B. GREGORY

120 Hocking Ave., Chilliwack, B.C., writes the following:

"My knowledge of the Watson district, prior to 1910, is confined mainly to the territory South and South West.

Arriving with my brother, Alvin E. Gregory, by covered wagon from Maple Creek, via Swift Current and Saskatoon, then East over the old Riel Rebellion trail to the Quail Plains in the summer of 1903, and joined in September by our mother, Sara Gregory. We squatted on unsurveyed

land which later became our homesteads on Sec. 16-35-19 W2nd.

The country then was one vast uncultivated space, composed of open prairie and poplar and willow bluffs and lots of sloughs, well filled, muskrat houses in all of them. There was an unlimited number of geese, ducks, chickens, partridges and rabbits, the latter being the winters meat supply for many of us for the first couple of winters.

The subject of most interest was which of the three surveys would the C. N. R. build on. We hoped for the South one but had to settle for the center one. Our nearest post office was Fishing Lake, forty miles East, which I never saw. Our mail was left at Oscar Foster's farm, south of Watson, by any one coming that way and as far as I know, we never missed any letters or papers, thanks to the kindness and thoughtfulness which was always evident among the early settlers.

Getting settled and breaking up the land was our first thought. My brother went to Prince Albert with our four horses and worked in a lumber camp, the winter of 1903 and 1904, leaving Mother and myself with a winter's supply of food and a pony. Mother's nearest woman neighbor was Mrs. John Howe, eight miles away. The snow was so deep that winter that the pony could not get through the drifts. Having no boards to make skis and with only a hand saw and an axe for tools, I hand sawed a poplar log, fashioned a pair and dried them over the kitchen stove and made the sixteen mile trip to Oscar Fosters for the mail. Every two or three weeks was often enough for that type of travel. The next winter my brother held down the Homestead and I worked with a French surveyor named Lemoine and helped survey townships 30 to 40 in range 15 and 16. The following winter, John Howe and I trapped this territory for mink and brought out a load of fish from one of the lakes.

Our first crop of oats in 1904, on Spring breaking, were of an unknown variety of black oats, well mixed with wild ones, which grew taller than any we grew later, being six feet high in some places. One land seeker from the States expressed concern in case our horses got into the crop and we would never find them. However, the oats produced abundantly and left a heritage of wild oats that we battled with for years and as far as I know were never completely disposed of as pioneers.

The years of 1905 and 1906 were good crop years. Club wheat, forty bushels to the acre, grading No. 2, as it was not a good milling variety. 1907 was a cold, wet, late spring and grain was heavy but badly frozen. I saw Red Fife wheat so tough and frozen that it would not run down the high bagger in to the wagon but had to run on the ground to get it down the pipe. 1908, 1909, and 1910 saw the introduction of newer varieties of

wheaa. In 1908 I had the satisfaction of winning 1st prize for the best ten acres of standing wheat in a competition sponsored by the Watson Agricultural Society, with a variety known as Preston.

Our earliest, nearest neighbors, to the East, were of German extraction and came in through Muenster and were from Missouri — Matt Bartlett, Albert Getzmier, Barney Hatke, Adam Hufnagel, John Steiner and Gerhard Jensen. To the north of us were the Schwindt's and Stockbruggers. Later on around 1905, 1906 and 1907 settlers filled the district around us. Mr. and Mrs. James Hunter and son Ray from Ontario, Mr. and Mrs. Jeff Wilson and family from Ontario, and Mr. and Mrs. George Wilson and four sons, George, Roy, Hugh and Goeff from Wolsley, Sask. settled close to where the town of Leroy is situated and was known at that time as Bogend, named after a place in Ontario. Wilsons had the Bogend Post Office and were and still are known throughout the district as leaders in social welfare and all community activities. Bogend was the dividing point in the early days between Lanigan and Watson as trading centers.

Mr. and Mrs. Frank Coleman (English) and family of William, Stanley, Arthur, Albion, Amy, Mabel and Dora were among the settlers. Mr. Coleman was a keen livestock breeder of registered shorthorns which oldtimers will remember seeing at the Watson Agricultural Society Fair at which Mr. Coleman was a director and active worker. Their coming to our district greatly affected my personal life as I married Dora in 1908. Other settlers before 1910 in our township, were Alex McIntosh, Mr. and Mrs. John Porten Mr. and Mrs. Sandy Dewar, Mr. and Mrs. Dave McCulloch, Mr. and Mrs. Ole Peterson, Robert Burton, Mr. and Mrs. F. Kreps, Mr. Pratt, Gabby Johnston, M. O. Johnston and family, William Sommers, Chris. Sommers, Frank Sommers, Wm. Clogg, Tony Kohler and Sommonet Brothers.

Church services were held by the Baptist student V. A. Ray, who built a church in Quill Lake. He rode horseback to Natika which was the name of the Post Office in our home, and held services at regular intervals. Later when a school was built at Bogend, services were held there by other denominations. Social life consisted of picnics in the summer and dances in the winter at the different homes. From the start, considerable interest was held in politics and farm organizations. A local of the Grain Growers met regularly at Bogend which no doubt gave LeRoy its start to being the co-operative community it is today.

Here are some incidents which stand out in my memory. One day, in 1904, while hauling oats from Shcho for the C.N.R. grading crews, we only made two miles, the ground being so soft from rain, that once the

turf cut through, down the wheels would go to the axel. The rest of the time being spent in unloading and loading.

A neighbor had an unruly yoke of oxen which on occasions were known to get out of control and run into the brush. One day this settler was plowing and the oxen decided they'd had enough, so ran into a slough and stopped in the center. No amount of throwing stones at them would chase them out, so the owner hit for his shack and came back with the shotgun which he opened up with at a goodly distance and advancing between rounds until the oxen ambled out and went to the stable. It is a matter of record that they never ran away again, but faithfully toiled at their masters bidding.

In the spring of 1906 muskrats were so plentiful that in ten days we trapped three hundred within a mile and a half of the homestead and three other trappers were trapping in the same area. Incidentally we got forty-five dollars for the lot.

E. NEAL

Eric Neal homesteaded in the Bogend district in 1905 and continued to make his home there for forty-five years and, strange as it may seem early in 1950 disposed of his business and moved with Mrs. Neal to Alberta.

Eric also was an auctioneer, a real estate agent, sold insurance, and engaged in general office work. Mr. Neal was always active in all community enterprises and was on the forward line in any move to make the district a better place to live in. He served on the Municipal Council and was Reeve of the LeRoy Municipality for several years. Mr. Neal was a staunch supporter of the farm movement and went as a delegate to Ottawa at the time the farmers met the Government in protest of the low price of wheat. Only recently when the Leroy Community, by a mighty co-operative effort, established their Union Hospital, Eric Neal scarcely slept day or night till the hospital was an established fact.

Pages might be written as to the part Mr. Neal and family played in their district, however, Mr. Neal has written his story of the pioneer days and he tells it well; as follows—

"It was October 1905, as I was walking down Main Street, Winnipeg, Man., speculating mentally as to whether and where I should go to look for job, I came face to face with Sandy Haycock (he and I served in the same "outfit" in South Africa and had not met again since our return to Canada. After the usual Old Soldier greetings, Sandy says "What are you doing Eric?" "Nothing that will make history," says I. "Why not come out to

the Watson district and take a homestead, there is lots of good land out there" says Sandy. "Lets have a quick one while we talk it over, Sandy," I said as we turned in to the Brunswick.

Two weeks later I'm on a train going west. Arriving at Watson I am greeted by friend Sandy, at the King Edward Hotel, Haycock and Haywood proprietors, introduced to the genial bartender, Harry Niddery, George Wilson of Bogend, and Sheldon Bullis, well, before we got through I don't know whom I met. George Wilson was playing the fiddle. Then I played the fiddle and George danced a jig. Among the first men I met at Watson I recall, was Jake Riesen, a fine man and a good citizen. I believe he and Mrs. Riesen are still alive and well.

A few days later Mr. William Weeks and Mr. John Shakespeare of Chicago arrived at Watson, they are seeking homesteads too. Securing the services of Gordon and White, locaters, we go out with Gordon and he takes us down to the alkali flats, twenty miles southeast, after we had explained to Gordon that we were not interested in salt mines, but wanted a homestead, where we could improve the land, and sell out for a big price and return to civilization, we returned to Watson, and went out the next day with Jim White, who took us out to see Section 20-34-19, W-2nd. On this section we filed a few days later Weeks taking the N. E. quarter, and yours truly the S. W. quarter. Later in 1907 I was successful in getting a postoffice located there. It was called Nealdale P. O. and I was the postmaster. Alf (Shorty) Guittard was mail carrier and his route was Watson to Bogend to Nealdale to Prairie Rose.

I returned to Manitoba that fall, got married in February, 1906, and shipped a car of settlers effects from Winipeg, composed of second hand machinery, a light team of horses, a cow, a few household goods, and four four-year-old steers. I was told by my Dad, that these steers could be broken, and would make oxen and would greatly assist in breaking up my homestead. and really were the only thing for a homesteader. My brother-in-law and I went with the car, and arrived in Watson last day of April 1906. It had been a very early spring, but turned cold the day after we arrived. We set out for the homestead with the team and wagon loaded with only about six hundred pounds of essential things as we were told the roads were bad. This proved to be more than correct, as moving south west from Watson we swam the Creek and were stuck getting on to higher ground, but we had lots of company and about fifteen outfits helped one another get out of the mud on to higher ground. Here we found the first community spirit that was to prevail over the homestead years. 1906 was the heaviest influx of settlers into this district, although some settlers came in as early as 1902.

It took us twelve hours to make the sixteen miles to the homestead, the last eight miles there was no road and we drove all around the section before we were sure that we were on the right quarter. The summer of 1906 was wonderful, showers every other day and everything grew profusely, wonderful gardens just on sod. 1907 and 1908, however, crops were badly frozen, while 1909 the crop was wonderful. After getting my shack built, my wife came up from Winnipeg, and we spent the summer making hay. Grass and peavine grew up to your knees on the high land and we put up a hundred loads which we sold to settlers coming in that fall at two dollars per load which was a lot of money in those days. Weeks and Shakespeare families came in that fall, and we had neighbors, Thompsons, Wickmans, Astles, Steadmans came that year. Blanchard, Hannahs, Byers, Bullfords, Moores, Johnstones, and Neimars were already in. We had baseball, East and West teams one Saturday afternoon played at Neimers, the next at Grandpa Moores. Later every one within one hundred miles knew of the Nealdale ball team, composed mostly of Moore boys, John Ernie, Walt, Philip and Owen, and Len Koski, Bill and Stan Stewart, Hadon Shakespears, and Bill Weeks Jr. Yes, in those days we found time to play ball, and in the winter months we visited, and danced. We lived in those days. I played the fiddle some, and talking about fiddles reminds me of another family, Frank, Bill and Chris. Sommers, — they were all fiddlers and good ones. A dance never broke up till daylight, then we had coffee and went home.

There was lots of game in those days, ducks galore, every pothole was a lake, and full of ducks. We used to take pot shots too. Knocked over eight or ten at a shot and that was our weeks meat. There were lots of deer, in the winter of 1906-1907, one band consisted of twenty-seven. There were not many in the following spring. I shot a lot of deer, but never wasted any meat. One conscientious Justice of the Peace, who had a country store, and didn't know the ways of the west too well, sent the local game warden "Happy" Fletcher, to search my premises. The game was well hid, and Happy searched in vain. My wife had a roast of venison in the oven, so we asked Happy to stay for dinner. He said "thats the best beef that I've eaten since I came to Saskatchewan."

Our spiritual requirements were taken care of by a young homesteader John Fitzpatrick. He was a conscientious young man, a student, I believe, who afterwards became a minister. He gave forth every Sunday at Grandpa Moores; most of the neighbors attended. We listened to a good sermon and sang hymns. Several of the girls could play the organ. Fitzpatrick, by the way, gave his services without remuneration of any kind, although he was

hard up as most of us were. The winter of 1906 - 1907 will always be remembered by the early settlers as a long, cold winter with lots of snow.

I sufered with a bad toothache that winter for several days and finally hit for Watson. It took me all day to get there over terrible roads, and on arriving found Dr. McGorman indisposed. Sandy advised me to go to Mr. Mercer, the jeweler, who, he said, could pull teeth to perfection. After a couple of bracers I interviewed Mr. Mercer and sure enough he had that offensive molar out in a jiffy. Another time that winter I went to Watson. It was forty below. When I was ready to start for the homestead about sundown a blizzard came up. Sandy and some of the boys threatened to tie me up if I attempted to go home. However, I knew my wife would worry if I didn't turn up, so I hitched up and was on my way. The wind was North, and going South wasn't bad, until I turned to go South-west south of Julius Fosters. The snow was deep but drifted hard, and I couldn't tell whether I was on the road or not. Finally I realized that I was off the road, but still going in the right direction. I tied the lines up and hoped the horses would take me home. I had decided too that if I hit bush where there was good shelter, I'd pull in and make a fire and stay till daylight. After travelling what seemed to be hours, I heard a sound as though I was crossing a bridge, and then a shout, I stopped the team, and after a minute or so the form of a man emerged from down under. My team had taken me right over the roof of Barney Hatkes shack. I was only a matter of yards off my trail. Barney insisted on me staying the night, and after shovelling snow for about half an hour we got the team in the barn. At daylight the next morning I resumed the journey, and made the remaining five miles to reach the homestead. Many people lost their lives that winter on the roads, in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and North Western States.

The spring of 1907 was very late, I seeded five acres of oats on the 13th of May with the seeder rattling over the frozen ground and still odd little drifts of old snow on the land. This yielded one hundred and four bushels to the acre. All wheat was frozen that year, and bad. We had a picnic on the twenty-fourth of May near Moores on east side of Jansen Lake. A couple of boys from the west side crossed over the old ice, and Henry Johnstone had a cow stuck in a snow drift when he returned home from the picnic.

But I must tell you something of my four steers which I brought west to assist me in homesteading. I guess I just didn't understand the critters, or perhaps hadn't the proper amount of patience, or could it be that I had just picked on four of the most unreasonable steers in the world. I finally reached the stage where I could hitch a yoke of what were now

"Oxen" to the wagon, and would start off to drive them down to a neighbor. They went along beautifully until I was passing a slough (These sloughs were deep, by the way, as every pot hole was full of water) then they'd head right into the deepest part, in spite of all my Geeing, Hawing, pleading and cussing, there they'd stay until I finally waded ashore and hid in the brush until they saw fit to wander out to dry land again. Then I'd climb aboard, and they would handle nicely until I got about a mile down the road, then they'd stop, lay down and refuse to move. All forms of persuasion were useless. From several willow gads worn down to the hilt, to the Lords Prayer said backward, the only thing to do was to strip the harness off and leave them there to return to their mates on the homestead when they saw fit, which was generally before night; as the mosquitoes were terrible that summer and we used to smudge every night. Well, I finally decided to get rid of my "Oxen". One day Bill Sproule came over from his homestead about ten miles east, having heard that I had oxen for sale. I explained to Bill that they really were mean critters, but that didn't seem to alarm him at all, and we dealt. Some time later that summer I was riding through the district near Bill's homestead, and rode in to see how he was getting along. Mrs. Sproule was home, and she said "Bill will be up shortly, he is breaking, and comes right up to the shack," I noticed a nice lot of



Threshing we will go! (A. J. Dennis)

newly turned land and shortly along ambles my four reformed steers, proudly pulling a sixteen inch breaker, and rolling over the sod as nice as could be. Mrs. Sproule came out with a slice of bread and gave each one a piece. I believe Bill Sproule broke up most of his homestead with those self same steers.

I got another team of horses, and my wife and I proceeded to break five acres of land I had cleared. I had never farmed before, and I'll never forget that strike out. My wife drove the outfit and I held the plow. I said "keep your eye on that dark object, and head straight for that." I was too intent on keeping the plow cutting the small roots and dodging the large ones to pay any attention to where we were going. But on reaching the south line of the quarter, I looked back, Oh! what a furrow. The dark object that we had sighted on was one of Jake Arin's cows that had wandered near to our land. She must have wandered some too, after we sighted on her judging by that strike out. However, that five acres the following year produced one hundred and four bushels of oats to the acre.

Ours was an L. I. D. (Local Improvement District) before the Municipality was formed. We did so many days road work, in place of paying taxes. The method of course was primitive as compared with today. We cut the brush off the road allowance, and filled in pot holes with teams and slushes. Yes, some days those, those old days. "But daddy," our kids would say in later days, it must have been terrible, "Oh not so bad" I'd say, "The two eldest girls were born on the homestead with only kind old "Granny Niemeier" to help bring them into the world, no doctor short of Watson. And they look as healthy as the average kids today. Yes my wife and I agree today that those were the happiest days of our lives. We had real neighbors then. Too bad that the same community spirit, which prevailed in those days, does not exist in the hearts of all the people, of all the world today." Signed at Acme, Alberta, on November 26, 1950 by Eric Neal.

Herman Sproule of Watson tells what might be termed a sequel to the story Mr. Neal relates about the oxen he sold to Wm. Sproule. (The Wm. Sproule and G. H. Sproule families while of the same name were not related but were neighbors in the old Ardath district some fifteen or sixteen miles south of Watson).

Herman was a boy about thirteen years of age. The youngsters those days only got to go to town once or twice a year, perhaps fair day and once more if lucky. However, on this occasion Billy invited Herman to go along to Watson one summer day. They hitched a pair of the oxen, those that Eric Neal sold to Wm. Sproule, to the wagon and started to town, only fifteen miles. There were no roads, only trails. They progressed fairly

well till they reached the flat land three or four miles south of Watson, and without any preliminary warning the steers plunged into the middle of a small lake, and there they stopped. The water was up to the wagen box. No amount of persuasion would induce the oxen to move. Herman was a little frightened and asked Mr. Sproule what they were going to do. Billy said he didn't know. The mosquitoes swarmed in clouds. The steers laid down in the water and cooled off. They licked their mosquito wounds and rested, all at once without notice they got up and marched out of the water with the same alacrity with which they went in, and proceeded on to town.

Herman relates they only stayed in town long enough to get their supplies and started back home. Oxen would always travel faster when headed towards home. The only thing Herman recalls about the trip home was that they ate cheese and crackers all the way.

Whether this slow trip with the oxen had anything to do with Herman Sproule turning to race horses is not quite clear; nevertheless, the fact remains that Herman along with his farming operations and his work at the service station finds time to breed and train a few standard bred road horses each year.

JACOB AUCHSTAETTER

Jacob Auchstaetter with his family came from Sioux City, Iowa in the spring of 1903. He was one of the group that came by rail to Sheho and freighted their effects over land to the Big Quill Plains.

Mr. Auchstaetter had filed on his homestead, site unseen, and located about seven miles south and west of Watson on what is now No. 6 highway. A son, Louis F., born Sept. 30, 1903 is said to have been the first white child born to settlers in the Watson district.

Mr. Auchstaetter helped organize and build the Early Dawn School and was a member of the Board of Trustees for many years. He was active in the co-operative and organized farm movement, including the Grain Growers Association, the Co-operative Elevator Co. and later the Wheat Pool organization. He also served as Councillor for Division six of Lakeside Municipality, and helped organize the original Watson Rural Telephone Co. in 1915 and served on the Board of Directors, later taking over the duties of Secretary-Treasurer. His son Louis F. is operating what was his fathers organized homestead as part of his farm today. Another son Paul is an established farmer in the district. A third son Charles lives at Kandahar, and the fourth, Tony, resides at Haucy, B. C. The only daughter Agnes is now Mrs. Paul Kaun, and lives at Middle Lake.

W. T. SMART

W. T. (Bill) Smart was a native of England, coming to Canada as a young man and landed at Watson, November 25, 1906, as a member of the staff of the Canadian Bank of Commerce. Perhaps no individual was more familiar to the people of Watson and district for well nigh forty years than Bill Smart. Jim Oliver once remarked that Bill walked more miles per day on the sidewalks of Watson than any other three men combined. Mr. Smart was associated on the bank Staff with Mr. W. E. D. Farmer as manager and Tom Jennett as the third member of the staff. The bank first opened for business in the sample room of the then Victoria Hotel. The same staff also opened a branch in Wadena and alternated between the two places three days each week. Later a manager was sent to Wadena and Mr. Farmer operated the Watson branch. In the spring of 1907 the bank moved into a two room building located on Main Street about where the town library and rest room are now located. This same building has been in Mrs. Mary Bettin's back yard for many years and used as a wood house and wash room. Mr. Smart points out that not every woman has the privilege of doing her laundry and splitting her wood in the Bank of Commerce.

Bill refers to the first Bank of Commerce manager (Mr. Farmer) at Watson as a well met chap, a good mixer and fairly musical and very popular in the community. Mr. Farmer was transferred in the spring of 1907, and Henry Kerr became the second manager at Watson. The present bank building was erected the summer of 1907 and a big dance took place before the fixtures were moved in.

It is rumored that Bill resigned from the staff of the Canadian Bank of Commerce to get married. The bank had a ruling that any employees not having attained a certain degree of seniority could not marry and remain on the bank staff. It was a case of stay single or quit.

Mr. Smart married Elle Wright. The Wright family, Mother, three sons, and two daughters were early settlers in the district. Mr. Smart relates that in 1907 Mrs. Gordon who had run a boarding house rented same to Mrs. Wright. The Wright family homesteaded south west of Watson but have since moved away. Jack Wright possessed skill as an athlete but died twenty years ago. Ted met an accidental death in Arizona, Charlie lives in Winnipeg and a daughter, Florence, married Owen Moore and resides in Winnipeg.

Bill Smart proved up a homestead thirteen miles north of Watson. Harry Niddery, who worked in the hotel as bar tender about this time,

homesteaded on the same section as Bill. When the Spalding Municipality was formed, Mr. Smart served as Secretary-Treasurer for many years. He was also Town Clerk of the Town of Watson, a position he held until he retired after the last World War.

Mr. Smart was secretary of the Watson Agricultural Society during much of the twenty five years that organization was active. He was Justice of the Peace for a period and Notary Public all the years he was in business. He also served as Coroner at one time and did a general office business of drawing up leases, land transfers and sundry documents. Many people of Watson District went to Bill Smart for business advice.

Mr. and Mrs. Smart were always active in Community affairs. During the early years they both participated in amateur plays and local concerts. Mrs. Smart often contributed vocal selections at gatherings where entertainment was desired. She continued to assist in directing concerts, etc., while she resided in Watson. Following the last World War, Mr. Smart resigned from his clerical work and with Mrs. Smart moved to Vancouver where the most of their children had already gone. Their elder son H. W. (Bert), took over where his father left off in the Town Clerks Office after returning from overseas and continues to operate a general business office.

Mr. and Mrs. Smart raised a family of four, two sons and two daughters. Mabel married Herb Inkster and resides in Vancouver, Bert married Mildred Gourley and lives in Watson, Ellen and Ted both went to the western coast, after finishing school in Watson.

Mr. Smart, from his home in Vancouver, prepared a splendid manuscript concerning the early years and much information about the early residents of Watson, all of which is so essential to make a work of this nature possible. Some of the incidents he tells about we shall relate here. Other facts he has given appear in different places in this book.

The first station agent Mr. Smart knew at Watson was named Percy Davidson. Bill relates that he was a good-natured soul, and usually sang while working. A couple of his favorite songs were "Down Where the Cotton Blossoms Grow", and "You Are As Welcome As the Flowers In May." Mr. Davidson was succeeded by Harold Squibb who married Peggy Ryan of Watson. Mr. Squibb subsequently went to B.C. and served the Railroad at different points.

It seems that much of the life of the town in those days centered around the hotel. S. M. Haycock and Mr. and Mrs. Thomas, L. Hayward owned and ran the Victoria Hotel. Mr. Smart says it was built by a man named Follest who homesteaded north of town. The winter of 1906-1907 was a tough one. Bill Smart along with other single men of the village lived

at the Victoria Hotel and Room was \$5.00 per week or a ticket for twenty-one meals for \$3.50 which figures at something less than seventeen cents per meal. Compare that, readers, a full course meal with beverages and dessert with what you get to day in the way of eats for seventeen cents, and Bill says they were good meals. The hotel was heated by two wood-burning stoves, one up-stairs and one down. The caretaker stayed up all night keeping the fires burning in an effort to keep the frost line back, but in spite of his heroic efforts in the morning the bed covers were often covered with frost from frozen breath and the water jugs frozen over with ice. Mr. Smart recalls that on these cold mornings it was customary when the men guests came down for breakfast, for Harry Niddery, who was bar tender, to invite them into the bar for a drink on the house, to take the chill out of their bones, and perhaps bolster up their courage to remain another night.

We also hear about the first curling game in Watson, from Mr. Smart. Of course there was no rink, but one cold morning a couple of the roomers decided that the upstairs hallway would do nicely for an ice sheet. They proceeded to borrow a couple of bed room chambers, well frozen, for curling rocks. The game was going nicely up and down the hall but ended abruptly when an irate landlord appeared on the scene.

It seems that one of the hotel proprietors had a fancy for wild animals and assembled quite a collection which he corralled in the hotel back yard. There was a lynx, several minks, one large bear and two cubs. The bears were fond of beer, the big bear would stand on his hind legs and guzzle a bottle of beer almost on a par with some of the local talent today. There was also a deer that became very tame. It bedded down in the barn at night and took possession of the premises by day. When the weather became nice the deer liked to get in the dining room at meal time and get a tid bit from the guests at the table. One day the deer ate a rag that was soaked with coal oil, for lunch, and that ended him. The dining room girls were not sorry because they had the idea that the deer was receiving more attention from the male guests than they were. Bill doubts that this was actually so and is emphatic that so far as he personally was concerned it was not true.

Watson was a village in 1906, and B. K. Thompson was the first overseer, it did not yet have sufficient population to qualify as a town. In 1908, however, Dr. Neely of Humboldt who was then M.L.A. for the Provincial Constituency put a Private Members Bill through the Saskatchewan legislature that gave Watson the Status of a town. There were certain advantages in being a town such as borrowing money for public improvements, etc.

There was no school house in Watson in 1906. However, Mr. Smart says

the district was in the process of being formed, and school was held in the Presbyterian church. Mr. Smart believes Clinton B. McGregor was the first school teacher. Mr. McGregor later became a lawyer.

The first foot ball soccer team was organized in 1908. The Watson Club became a part of a league consisting of Quill Plain, Paswegan, Wadena, Margo, and Invermay. The players on the Watson team are listed and many will remember a number of them. They were Bill Harris, Jake Bailey, Ed. Kercher, Ray Hunter, Jack Wright, Edward (Nip) Wright, Bill Wilson, Walt Muir, Stanley Bailey, W. J. Postlewaite, Dan Fletcher and W. T. Smart.

W. J. Postlewaite was the first grain buyer in Watson and was agent for the Western Canada Flour Mills. This family were good community folk and concerned themselves in everything from church to local sports. They later moved to Saskatoon where Mr. Postlewaite died.

Mr. Smart mentions the Ryan family. They were early settlers and lived for a long time in the house (now owned by R. Hobbs) just east of the King George Hotel. Besides the father and mother there were three daughters and several grown boys. The men folk had homesteads somewhere near the old Irish Colony quite a distance to the Southwest. Their home in town was quite a gathering place for the young people. They were a sociable family and their home was always open. The Ryan family later lived on a farm two miles south of Watson, they sold out about 1914 and with part of the family moved to the State of Oklahoma. It is said they were in an Oil Boom that developed there about that time.

Mr. Smart writes. "By and large the old timers of Watson and District were a kindly and happy bunch of people and I am always reminded of the words of the song "Those Dear Hearts and Gentle People That Live and Love in My Home Town," when I think of the forty years my wife and I spent in Watson especially the early years.

Concluding we would like to lift a page from Mr. Smarts manuscript and quote it just as he has written it.

Vancouver, B. C. "I have been asked by the committee appointed by the Watson and District Board of Trade to give what information and help I can toward the preparation of material to be used in the writing and publication of a book with the suggested title of "Fifty years of Progress". I am glad to be of what little help I can in this matter, although I must remark that I do not consider myself a pioneer in the truest meaning of the word as I came to Watson on the railroad in the latter part of 1906. I believe the railroad reached Watson in 1905. The real pioneers were those that freighted in by oxen or horses from as far away as Yorkton,

Sheho and Rosthern in 1902, 1903 and 1904. The Vossen families (Frank and John), Steinke, Auchstaetters, Spabergs, Fosters, Hinderks, Wickenhausers, Fuerstenbergs, Howes, Henry Ebbing and many others. It is to such as these that the real credit belongs for the fact that there are to-day such fine towns and communities on the prairies of Western Canada. We, who came later, only followed. I am afraid that we forget the debt owing to these old-timers who trekked, from end of steel, two or three hundred miles, mostly driving oxen (some had horses) to establish new homes and make a living from the soil in a new country. Making maybe twenty or thirty miles a day over the open prairie (there were no roads as we know roads today) possibly striking an old Indian trail occasionally; now and again bogging down in a pot-hole or slough and having to wait for hours for the arrival of some fellow traveller to help them to high ground again, fighting swarms of mosquitoes and drinking slough water. It took them a week or so to travel the same distance that we would cover today in four or five hours. We complain about our poor telephone service, our inadequate schools, our expensive light and power services. Next time we feel inclined to grumble at the present condition of things in general, pause awhile and remember that less than fifty years ago, when the real pioneers came to Watson and District there were no roads, no schools or churches, no telephones or electric lights, in fact there was practically nothing but the indomitable spirit of the pioneer. — W. T. Smart.

J. H. RIESEN

J. H. (Jake) Riesen was a native of the State Kansas, of German Mennonite stock.

Jake must have been more adventurous than the average youth of his time. When a young man he was a College Student in California, he crossed the continent on a bicycle and landed in Manitoba, June 1900, where he resumed his former profession as a school teacher. In April 1904, Jake came to Saskatchewan seeking land to homestead and farm. He went about the selection in a thorough manner as his memoir indicates. Mr. Riesen states that he, with Abe Doell, were the first settlers in township 34, Range 18.

The Riesen farm is located about fifteen miles south and a little east of Watson. While they farmed with oxen in the early years, he gradually equipped his farm with good horses and cattle.

Their first house was of boards supported by sod. This was later replaced by a substantial home. Only a year or two ago he lost his fine

barn by fire caused by lightning.

Mr. and Mrs. Riesen were known far and wide in the district and their latch key was always out to all who passed their way. Mr. Riesen



J. H. Riesen's first farm buildings

helped organize and build the old Ardath school near their farm. When about 1925 this school was destroyed by fire, the district was enlarged and a new school with high school accommodations was constructed on a new site. Mr. Riesen had a leading part and served on the board of trustees for many years. Mr. and Mrs. Riesen were always active supporters of Church work in their community. Jake helped organize the local of the old Grain Growers Association and was president of the Watson local for many years. He was active in all the farm organizations whose purposes were to better the conditions of the people on the land. In his memoirs he doesn't say much about the long winter drives hauling grain to the elevators, but he could tell a lot about it.

Mr. and Mrs. Riesen raised a family of four, two sons and two daughters. Hilda and Fritz with their families live in the Meadow Lake district. Elma, Mrs. Zacharias, lives in Watson and Bill the elder son with his family resides on the old Riesen farm. The original holdings have been added to, and today Bill Riesen operates something like two sections of land and does it mostly himself with all modern mechanized equipment.

Mr. and Mrs. Riesen retired from the farm February 1946 and reside in Watson.

Mr. Riesen, as will be noted in his memoirs refers to the lack of permanency that was too often prevalent in his community. No doubt this

lack of permanency plagued the most of the settlements in the early years. Cheap land had been the magnet that brought the early settlers here. Homesickness, inability to adapt themselves to new conditions and the crop hazards all played their part. Some settler's ambition seemed to be to make a stake, sell out and move away. While other homesteaders sold their one hundred and sixty acres to advantage, the fortune they had dreamed about failed to materialize. These people didn't plant shelter belts, constructed only temporary buildings, made little effort to beautify their surroundings. These things all tended to slow down the advancement of the district and made the efforts more difficult for those who desired to live their lives where they had selected their homes. We would like here, to quote in part, direct from Mr. Riesen's manuscript.

The few that are left say with the Poet
A little more tired at close of day,
A little less anxious to have our way,
A little less ready to scold and blame,
A little more care for a brother's name
And so we are nearing our journeys end
Where time and eternity meet and blend.

FOSTER BROTHERS

Five Foster Brothers were among a group of a dozen or more families that came ahead of the railroad and homesteaded in Township 35 and 36 five or six miles directly south of Watson. Most, but not all, of this group of settlers came from near Grafton, North Dakota. It was known in the early days as the Norwegian settlement. This group included the Spaberg family, the Foster Brothers, John Howe, J. K. Dahl, Gilbert Monsebroten, Carl and Conrad Braget, Arne Nabseth, Hans Hogan, Olaf Overby, E. Festad and others whose names are not available.

This group built a church which has since been moved away. They came from a wheat growing country and understood how to handle the prairie land.

Four of the Fosters, Oscar, Ben, Carl and Oden all obtained their homesteads on one section of land, another brother Julius homesteaded on an adjoining section. The four brothers mentioned first, sold their homesteads in 1910 and three of them pushed on to the Peace River Country where they were then three hundred miles from the railroad. Julius Foster homesteaded on one section of land, another brother Julius remained on his original homestead and continued to farm until his death in 1950.

GRANT EAST

Grant East, better known as Harry Muldoon, or just plain Mull, to his friends, came from Wisconsin in 1906 and homesteaded some ten miles to the southwest of Watson. Harry was a native of Virginia and as a boy struck out in the world for himself.

Harry's homestead was on the same section where Jake Smith carried on his early farming operations. Muldoon farmed with oxen like many of his neighbors. The oxen were supposed to be slow, nevertheless, they used to say that Harry was the last man out of town at night and the first man in town in the morning.

During the years prior to coming to Watson, Harry had attained some success as a boxer and wrestler throughout the central states. He continued to practise the manly art after settling in the Watson District and added color to many sporting events. He was also a weight lifter, juggler and punching bag artist, and sometimes gave exhibitions of his skill. The straightening out of horse shoes with his bare hands was only play for Muldoon during the days of his prime. A man named Barshell ran the Watson pool hall for a period, something of a wrestler himself, he built a room onto the back of the pool hall where the local talent practised and kept in trim for local matches.

Harry Muldoon was perhaps the most versatile man that struck the Watson district. Other than his athletic accomplishments, he worked as a painter and steeple jack, he was a carpenter and well digger, a farmer and stock raiser, and was no slouch at any of them. Only a short time ago, Harry, who was in his late sixties painted the water tower in the town of Humboldt, a job no one else around cared to tackle.

It is said that when a young man he made one venture in the field of matrimony, but since that time he has for the most part lived alone and carried on as a bachelor farmer. Harry acted as town constable in Watson on occasions for many years. At the present time he acts as policeman in the village of Leroy on Saturday nights, and is always friendly and cheerful. Those who knew Muldoon would hesitate, even today, to start "anything" when Harry is around. He continues to reside on his farm near Romance.

A. J. DENNIS

A. J. (Andrew) Dennis came to the Watson district from the state of Iowa, in 1908, along with his brother-in-law, W. J. Rossiter. They

purchased land about nine miles south of Watson.

Andrew came to Saskatchewan because he liked the country. Always a booster he contends there is no better place to live than the Watson district. A successful farmer for many years and still residing on his farm, Mr. Dennis is not at present actively engaged in farm work. His garden and orchard have been his chief interests now for several years. Mr. and Mrs. Dennis not only have a splendid vegetable garden, they also have berries, plums, cherries, and apples in abundance. Mr. Dennis usually attends the Provincial Horticultural Show and frequently exhibits apples and other fruits.

Mr. and Mrs. Dennis maintain a summer cottage at one of the northern lakes and manage to spend several week ends there during the summer months. Andrew doesn't talk much about the fish that get away, but brings them home on a string instead. When the big game season approaches he oils up his rifles and strikes out for the northern wilds, and always has something in the bag on returning. They are known for their generous hospitality and sumptuous table, to which they can point with pride that it nearly all comes from their own farm, the garden, the orchard, the flocks and herds.

There are two sons in the Dennis family, Burr and Raymond, and both are established farmers in the home community.

WICKENHAUSER BROTHERS

There were four of the Wickenhauser Brothers that came from Minneapolis to the Watson district in the spring of 1903. They were Paul, Joe, John and Godfrey. They unloaded their effects at Yorkton and were nine days by team reaching the sites of their homesteads. All four obtained land not many miles to the southwest from the present town of Watson.

Paul Wickenhauser, now deceased, operated as a stock and grain farmer, developed a well improved farm and was recognized as one of the best farmers of the district. Mrs. Wickenhauser still resides on the farm, which is managed by their only son, Paul, Jr.

John Wickenhauser lived on his improved homestead two miles S. W. of Watson till 1947, when he sold the place and moved to Watson where he now resides. He specialized in Belgian horses for many years till mechanized equipment replaced horse power.

Joseph Wickenhauser also settled in the same district as his brothers but has since obtained land south of Romance where he still resides, the farming operations being carried on by his sons.

Godfrey Wickenhauser resides on his homestead only two miles from

Watson, now on number six highway. He has continued as a stock and grain farmer.

J. K. DAHL

J. K. Dahl came to Canada from Norway in the spring of 1903. He worked for a year in Manitoba and North Dakota, and arrived in Watson on one of the first mixed trains to run over the new C.N.R. line. Mr. Dahl established his homestead about six miles south of Watson where he still lives. In 1914, Mr. Dahl married Clara Bjerke, who had that year arrived from Oslo, Norway, in Winnipeg. Mr. Dahl increased the acreage of his farm and was a recognized farmer. Farming was carried on with oxen, then horses, and in later years by tractors. John Dahl always believed in live-stock and has maintained a herd of short horn cattle and raised Yorkshire hogs in connection with grain farming. Today good buildings and modern machinery are the noticeable features of this farm.

Mr. and Mrs. Dahl raised a family of three daughters, Elsie, (Mrs. Art Hill), Ruth (Mrs. George Swanson) and Lillian, (Mrs. Walter Steinke). One son John, Junior, is associated with his father in the farm movement, operations.

John Dahl was always a strong supporter of the farm movement, and served in various capacities in the Wheat Pool and other farm organizations.

G. MONSEBROTEN

Gilbert Monsebroten was born in Norway and immigrated to North Dakota. In the spring of 1903 he landed at Yorkton, Sask., where he loaded his sleigh and drove by team to the Watson district and filed on his homestead about six miles south and a little east of Watson, where for thirty-five years he made his home. During the season of 1903 and 1904 when the C.N.R. was under construction Gilbert worked on that line.

Mr. Monsebroten, before coming to this district, had married Mary Strand at Grafton, N. Dakota. He returned to Grafton in the fall of 1903 to get his wife, again making the trip overland by team from Yorkton. They reached their home December 1, 1903.

Mr. and Mrs. Monsebroten, realizing the value of trees for protection and beauty planted a fine maple grove, around the yard. Log homestead buildings were replaced by more modern ones. Mr. Monsebroten helped organize the Quill Plains School district, and served on the Board of Trustees.

One daughter Grace, Mrs. E. Sorli, was one of the first two or three

children born to settlers in the Watson district.

In 1946, Einar Sorli, their son-in-law, took over the farm and Mr. and Mrs. Monsebroten moved to the town of Watson.

LAMPARD - STEWART

Two young British immigrants, Robert Lampard and Andrew Stewart, determined to find a homestead in Saskatchewan, left Strothelaire, Man., June 1905 with only a team of oxen hitched to a wagon loaded with a plow. After travelling for three weeks they arrived at a place called Fishing Lake. Here they learned the railroad had reached Watson and was building on westward. They moved on in that direction and located their homesteads about twelve miles south of Watson, near where the Dafoe Airport was later constructed. Their land was more or less covered with bush. Breaking and cultivating was slow and arduous with the machinery then available.

Robert Lampard enlisted in the First World War and was killed in action. The school district formed there later was named after him as was also the Post Office now located near the Airport.

Mrs. Stewart came from Scotland in 1912 and was married to Andrew Stewart in Winnipeg. They lost one son, Rodger, overseas during World War II. A daughter, Mrs. Hilliard Semens, (Margaret) resides in the Lampard District. Mrs. James Coma (Rhoda) lives in British Columbia. Douglas, deceased and James. Mr. and Mrs. Stewart continue to live on the farm where Andrew homesteaded in 1905.

MONTGOMERY BROTHERS

William and Robert Montgomery were among a group of young Scotchmen who arrived in the Watson district in 1904 and found homesteads east and south-east of town. Both were good stockmen and delighted in fine horses. Wm. Montgomery served as Councillor for his sub-district. Neither of the brothers was ever married.

Wm. Montgomery died on the operating table from a ruptured appendix too long delayed. Robert Montgomery sold his farm in the late thirties, and went to the Western coast on what was to have been a vacation. While there he disappeared and was never heard of again. He was a man of sound principles and strict habits. However, it was known to his friends that he often earned considerable money, and many people believe that he met with foul play some place in Vancouver.

DONALD J. MURRAY

It was a big jump from being a policeman in Edinburgh to a homesteader in Saskatchewan, but that was what happened when Donald J. Murray settled on his land seven miles south east of Watson in 1904. During the first year Mr. Murray worked on railway construction in summer and the lumber camps in winter. Mrs. Murray came from England and was married in 1912.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Murray took an active interest in community affairs. Mr. Murray was president of the Watson Agricultural Society for several years. He was also a member of the Wimmer School Board and was active in the organized farm movement. In 1936 Mr. and Mrs. Murray moved to the western coast and the farm has since been operated by their son, James Murray.

ROBERT DICKSON

Robert Dickson was another of the group of young men from Scotland who located his homestead southeast of Watson in 1904, where he lived till his death in 1940.

In 1915 Mr. Dickson married German Knapp. Their family consisted of one son and one daughter. Mr. and Mrs. Dickson developed a fine farm and good buildings. Mrs. Dickson now has her home in Watson and the farm is operated by her son Robert Jr. Her daughter, Jean, married Doug Gaultier.

F. J. WEBER

F. J. Weber with his family arrived at Watson from Lincoln, Nebraska in July 1906. Mr. Weber purchased a section of land seven miles south of Watson and this land is still owned by members of the Weber family.

The Webers were among the first in the Watson district to operate an Internal combustion tractor. Their big Hart Parr tractor handled eight plow bottoms and broke thousands of acres of prairie sod in the district.

The eldest son, August L. Weber, was one of the first experienced tractor men in the district and was often called in by other farmers to assist in tractor repair work. The Webers also operated a large threshing outfit, and besides handling their own crop, did custom work in the community.

Mrs. and Mrs. Weber continued to reside on the farm until Mr. Weber's death in 1938. A son, Lee Weber, lives on the old home farm. The other

sons August, Frank and Herman became established farmers in the Watson district. August Weber married Mayme Bettin, Frank's wife was Mary Pastl, Mrs. Joe Weber was formerly Walberga Breker and Herman married Helen Wingert. A daughter, Mrs. Ed. Gierl, resides in the Romance district. Rose, Gertie, Kay and Agatha are married, and Frances resides in California.

KIEFER

May 10th, 1910 was a fine spring day when Mr. and Mrs. J. P. Kiefer, four daughters and one son George, age 7, arrived at Watson from Wisconsin.

A son, Peter, and his wife had arrived a year before and Peter met the family at the station with wagon and oxen. The nine mile drive to the farm required three and a half hours, so everyone had ample time to marvel at the level and treeless prairie. All were ready to do justice to a good dinner awaiting them on arrival. Mr. Kiefer and sons had purchased open prairie land. John Kiefer arrived a couple days later with settler's effects and the work of moving and erecting buildings was a big job and one that all the early settlers had to meet.

They tackled the prairie sod with one of the large gasoline tractors that were used at that time and soon brought a considerable part of their land under the plow. They also had their share of the grief that so often was connected with the operation of these early machines.

Mr. and Mrs. Kiefer continued to reside in the Watson district till their deaths in the thirties.

Mr. and Mrs. Peter Kiefer moved to the Cudworth district when that country opened up. Later, when the hatching of baby chicks for sale became the fashion, they embarked in the hatchery business. Peter Kiefer died in 1950. John Kiefer returned to Wisconsin.

The youngest son George took over all the original Kiefer land and has added to the acreage and today with his sons operates one of the highly mechanized farms of the district. Modern farm buildings with good livestock are all combined on the Kiefer farm.

Clara (Mrs Peters) lives in Kelowna, B.C.

Katie (Mrs. Anstett) lives in California .

ONTARIO SETTLERS

It was in the spring of 1906 when a group of several families from near

Athens, Ontario, arrived in the Watson district and found land eighteen to twenty miles south of Watson.

Included in this group were S. Y. Bullis and sons, Alex Ketchen and family, George Sproule and family, W. R. Parish and family.

S. Y. Bullis acquired considerable land and farmed on quite a large scale for the early days. He handled and dealt in horses quite extensively. He moved to Winnipeg after farming at Watson for ten or twelve years.

ALEX KETCHEN

Alex Ketchen settled seventeen miles south of Watson not far from the Big Quill Lake. Mr. Ketchen was a livestock man and carried on ranching in connection with farming.

He bought and shipped stock till his death in 1945. In the spring of 1918 Mr. Ketchen sold his farm and moved with his family to the town of Watson where they resided. He was also engaged in the garage and implement business.

Gertrude, Dorothy, Ivan, Thomas and Mrs. Ketchen live in Vancouver; another daughter, Jean, lives in California; Mary is deceased.

GEORGE SPROULE

George Sproule also settled with his family in the old Ardath district. He carried on mixed farming and dairying. Later he moved to a farm three miles north of Watson, and retired in the Town of Watson till his death in 1946.

Walter, one of Mr. Sproule's sons served in the First World War. The eldest son Herman married Bessie Parish and they live in Watson. Herman farms from town while his son Ronald runs the B. A. Service station and also raises standard bred horses. Victor Sproule farms south of Watson, another son Leonard farms north east, and Charles is employed by the Saskatchewan Power Corporation. Mrs. Sproule resides in Watson.

WM. R. PARISH

Wm. R. Parish homesteaded in the Prairie Rose district, where the family first lived. Later he and the family moved to a farm three or four miles southeast of where the Dafoe Airport now stands, and in 1936 Mr. Parish purchased a farm on number six highway, six miles south of Watson where they lived till Mrs. Parish's death in 1939. Mr. Parish has since taken up residence in the town of Watson and the farm is operated by his son

Raymond, who married Vera Cronk. One of his daughters, Bessie, is Mrs. Herman Sproule.

H. A. GREEN

H. A. Green was experienced in hotel work when he came to Watson in 1910 and purchased the King George Hotel. Mr. and Mrs. Green were active community workers. Hugh Green was an enthusiastic base-ball fan and managed the Watson team two or three seasons. He took an active interest



Pennant Winners of Quill Plain's Baseball League, 1910.

Back Row, left to right: F. J. Vossen, Jr., T. J. Robinson, John Sommer, H. A. Green, Bud Fischer. Middle Row: Joe Vossen, Webster Burton, FOREST GREEN, Clete Andrews, J. H. Peterman. Front Row: Ollie Nelson, Eddie Vossen, Jos. Fleming.

in the Watson Agricultural Society and served as President of that organization. Mr. Green was Mayor of the Town for a term or two, also served on the Council.

After disposing of his hotel interests in Watson in 1924, Mr. Green moved to Saskatoon and was district manager of a Life Insurance Company for a few years. Later Mr. and Mrs. Green moved to Naicam and were again engaged in the Hotel business. Mr. Green was appointed Hotel Inspector for the Saskatchewan Government. The family resided in the town of Humboldt during this time and Mr. Green continued in this work till his health failed in 1945, followed by his death a year later.

Forrest Green, is married, lives at Flin Flon, Manitoba. May Green, married and lives in Jasper Park, Alberta. Gwenyth is married and lives in Kelowna, B. C. .

THE McNABS

William McNab located on land twelve miles south of Watson. Two or three years later he was joined by his parents Mr. and Mrs. Peter McNab, also several of his brothers including Alex, Robert, Peter and Archie.

Mr. Wm. McNab was municipal councillor for his division for some time, and also a member of the board of trustees for Sproule School district. He left the farm and operated a butcher shop in Nipawin District, Sask., until his death in the thirties.

Robert McNab joined the staff of the old Co-operative Elevator Co. as an agent when a young man and later with the Pool Elevator Company where he became a travelling superintendent. He has held this position for many years residing in the Kindersley district.

Robert married Hilda Hermanson in 1918. Their daughter Verna is married and lives in Regina, Alfred married and lives in Saskatoon, Jimmy married and lives in Sutherland, and Robert married and lives in Rosetown.

Alex McNab farmed and worked as a carpenter for many years till his death in the late thirties. He married Margaret Campbell. Their two children, Allan and Edith live at Neepawa, Man.

One daughter Mrs. A. V. Carr. (Jessie) lived in the same community where Mr. and Mrs. Carr raised their family. Following Mr. Carr's death in 1947, Mrs. Carr has lived in British Columbia. Their son Woodrow has taken over the farm.

Peter McNab Jr. qualified as a school teacher. He joined the Armed Forces and served overseas in the first world war. Following his discharge he was appointed postmaster for Watson, a position Mr. and Mrs. McNab

(Dorcas Thompson) have filled with distinction and to the satisfaction of the public for thirty two years. Peter is this year, 1950, retiring as postmaster. Their only son Max McNab distinguished himself as a hockey player and has been with the Detroit Red Wings for several years. Their only daughter Islay is married and lives at Swift Current, Sask.

Archie McNab left in the early twenties and lives in British Columbia.

LOUIS MOLLE

Louis Molle came with his family from Unity, Wisconsin in 1909, and settled on land about ten miles south west of Watson where he broke more than two hundred acres of prairie sod. Mr. and Mrs. Molle had a growing family and at that time there was no school within reach. The early Dawn School District was formed a few miles to the north and Mr. Molle purchased land one mile north of this school where he moved with his family.

Mr. Molle came from the timber country of Wisconsin and didn't hesitate to tackle another timber farm. With his sons he grubbed out a half section of bush land and developed it into one of the better farms of the district.

Mr. and Mrs. Molle were friendly and hospitable neighbors. No one cold, hungry or in need was ever turned from their door.

On June 4, 1939, Mr. Molle met with a fatal accident when about to board an excursion train at Romance to attend the festivity at Saskatoon in connection with the visit of their Majesties, King George VI and Queen Elisabeth, to Canada.

The three Molle sons are all established farmers in the home district. Edwin Molle married Annie Bergren, Elvin Molle's wife was Florence Cronk, and Alfred Molle married Alice Cronk.

J. S. STEINKE

"In 1903, the first settlers entered the Watson District. In that year my father and my oldest brother Joseph journeyed from Ohio to look over the district and before they returned filed on six homesteads namely: all of Sec. 24, Twp. 37 Rge. 19, and north half of Sec. 30, Twp. 37, Rge. 19. The district was a vast wilderness at the time, yet full of all sorts of game, such as moose, elk, deer, coyotes, rabbits, partridge, chickens and the brown bear. There was no need of any one going hungry for sake of wild meat. You could have your choice. There was an abundance of poplar timber and willows, and the very best of grasses for hay and pasture for cattle. Most of the early pioneers used this poplar for building material for their houses and

stables and in many cases they used poplar blocks four feet long for well curbing as lumber was not available. We were unable to buy any nails or spikes, so we used a wooden pin. By drilling a hole through the end of the poles and driving a round wooden pin through both poles it held quite firmly. Hay racks, bob sleighs, stone boats and many other articles were made from this poplar and willow. And before I forget I made a jumper from a few poplar poles which had the right shape for the runners, and a large box that we brought in with us served as the body.

Some of the first settlers of the district were Mr. Frank Vossen, Sr., Mr. John Vossen, Sr., Mr. Spaberg, Julius Foster, Ben Foster, Carl Foster, J. H. Wilkes, Joe Hufnagel, Jacob Spring, Oscar Foster, Mr. Stobbler and many others whose names I am unable to recall at the present. Most of these old pioneers have past away or moved to other districts. (Yes, came and are gone, BUT NOT FORGOTTEN).

Mr. F. J. Vossen, Jr. was our first postmaster. In 1903 he was successful in obtaining the post office on his father's farm four miles north of Watson. Two years later Mr. Joe Hufnagel and Mr. F. J. Vossen, Jr., built a General Store and Post Office in Watson directly on the centre of main street between the King George Hotel and Sproule's Filling Station. Later this building was moved to 1st Street East and is now occupied by Mr. Bert (Doc) Widdifield. In 1905 Mr. J. H. Wilkes and Mr. Jacob Spring both built small restaurants to accommodate the people of the district with warm lunches after their long journeys. The C.N.R. Station was also built in the spring of 1905, as the C.N.R. grade had been finished and the steel laid as far as the City of Saskatoon.

We arrived at Sheho in May 1904, which was as far as the steel was laid on the C.P.R., and was the closest to our destination. On our journey to the Watson District we were accompanied by fifteen others, which made the trip more pleasant. The weather was fine but the going was hard and slow. We travelled by wagon with horse and ox teams. It took sixteen days of travel to reach the Watson District, some ninety miles across the country. Every wagon was loaded to capacity with luggage and supplies. I am unable to give you all the details of this trip but due to several rainy days the soil was soft and we were able to make only a few miles per day. Within a few miles of our destination we reached the Iron Spring Creek at F. J. Vossen, Sr., place just four miles north of Watson. There the creek was about one half mile wide and Mr. Joe Vossen was kind enough to help us across on a raft. There was about eight feet of water in the centre of the creek while at the townsite of Watson the creek was one mile wide and the entire townsite was covered with water.

The townside was surveyed in 1906, and buildings sprang up like mushrooms everywhere. This boom only lasted for one year but during this time the following places of business and dwellings were built. G. H. Cameron Print Shop, Wolch's General Store, Spaberg and Stritzel Hardware, J. C. Guittard Livery Barn, Gordon and Gregory Massey-Harris Implements, King George Hotel, Alexander Hotel, Vossen and Bettin International Harvester Co. Implements, the Merchantile General Store, Joe Hufnagel and F. J. Vossen Post Master, Jacob Spring Livery and Feed Stable, the Canadian Bank of Commerce with Henry Kerr Manager. The Town of Watson grew steadily every year until we reached the present time 1950, when it really did boom. At one time in the mid-summer there were eighteen new buildings under construction."

J. S. Steinke.

MRS. PETER BOHNEN

2703-37 Ave., Vernon, B.C.

At the age of ten I came to the Watson district with my parents, Mr. and Mrs. John Windschiegel, brothers and sisters and went through the hardships, joys and sorrows of the pioneers, so consider myself a real pioneer.

We came to Watson on the twenty third day of May 1905, and were met at the station by Mr. H. Wilkes who carried a lantern and took us to his restaurant where we slept on the floor.

The grass was green and crocuses were blooming everywhere, gophers were playing around, meadowlarks were singing and wild geese were honking overhead. We thought it was the most beautiful country that we had ever seen. My father's homestead was about eight miles north of Watson on the north west quarter of Sec. 32, Twp. 37, Rg. 18. We passed near two houses on the way from Watson to our homestead. These were owned by Pete Bartsch and Frank Vossen. Watson then consisted of one store and two restaurants. The store was owned by J. P. Hufnagel who also had the post office in his building with Vossen postmaster. The restaurants were owned by J. Spring and H. Wilkes. That was about all, no church or school. Twice a month Catholic Church Service was held in the farm house of J. Spring about three miles from Watson. This land now belongs to A. Kintz.

As soon as my father had the cellar dug we moved into it and lived there for a few months. We had to wait for shingles and stove pipes.

The people were all friendly and willing to help one another. They all seemed happy and ambitious. It really seemed like a great country especially for young folks.

Since there was no school we spent most of our time exploring the wide open spaces. Not far from our house there was a coyote den. In the even-

ing we would watch a mother coyote and her pups playing; it was most interesting. Often that winter when it was bright moonlight we could see coyotes walking on the snow about half a mile from home. Sometimes ten or twelve of them, it was lovely to see. But when they would send out their blood curdling howls we were glad that we were near the house. One night, a few weeks after we came to the homestead, we heard a strange noise and upon looking out we saw seven or eight skunks walking around the house. We watched them for a long time and as we didn't bother them they did not bother us but went their way.

The first winter my father went hunting every other day and brought home about eight or ten rabbits. They were very good. In fact most of the people lived on rabbits, bread and tea. Few had milk or butter. The neighbors were very hospitable and everywhere we went we were asked to stay for a meal even though at most places it consisted of bread, syrup and tea.

One instance that I shall never forget was this: On our homestead there were several nice knolls. One close to our house we used to climb every day and looked around as far as we could see. There was only one house to be seen and then only at sunset. The house was east of us and the windows looked as if they were made of diamonds and gold. My brother John and I used to wonder about the house and imagined that rich people lived there. One day we decided to go and find the house. We walked about half a mile before getting into brush and trees. There were no roads or paths of any kind. No sign that anyone had ever walked there before and I suppose no one ever had. Finally we came to a house. We knocked and knocked but no one answered. There were no houses within sight. When we started for home the sky was clouded over so we did not know the direction. We walked for a long time and thought that we were going west, finally we realized that we were lost. When we got out of the bush it was too dark to see our house and we were too tired to go any further so we sat down quite frightened.

Meanwhile at home our parents were almost sick with worry and anxiety. My father started out for the nearest neighbor but in the meantime my mother hung a lantern up high on the east side of the house. My brother shouted, "There is a light", but we were afraid to go toward it for we thought that it might be Indians. After a while we went, the nearer we got to it the more frightened we were. It was not until we got within a few yards of the house that we realized that it was our own house. When my father came with help we were home, but the anxiety was too much for my mother she became sick and it was weeks before she was up and about again. Many people got lost but not all lived to tell about it. The same year some miles north of us a nine year old girl got lost about three miles from her home.

Years later I discovered that the house we saw was the homestead of a bachelor, Joe Bushie, who had lived there for a short time then gave it up and went away. Later it was homesteaded by Percy Baxter, and was north-east of where Daphne now stands.

The following spring many new settlers came in. Homesteads were taken up and houses were built all around us. Watson grew and soon became a fair size village. People became independent. They weren't so friendly and soon lost the pioneer spirit.

Much land was broken up, trees and brush were grubbed out. Soon drought and dust storms came. As we grew older the winters seemed to get colder. In 1930 the depression came and in 1936 we moved to British Columbia where the winters are mild and it is easy to make a comfortable living. But I always think of Watson as my home town and look upon the pioneer days as the happiest days of my life."

J. L. SMITH

Since I have been elected to give a brief review of fires which have occurred in Watson, and having no diary as a guide I am obliged to write from memory.

First of all I will ask you a question, why are we here, and what induced us to come here? A question I have often been asked.

Corn, was the answer. Brother Bill and I wanted to find a place where we couldn't grow corn. In Ohio where we were raised, it was corn from spring till winter and we had our sufficiency, so we tossed a coin, heads for North West Territories or tails for Argentine Republic. Heads won, so we wrote for information. The Canadian Government sent a special representative to give us full information, and the truth, for says he, "It gets very cold up there and if you are afraid of the cold don't go." Well, we weren't afraid of anything we even bet the Canadian Government ten dollars to a quarter section of land that we could exist on it for three years, and make a farm out of it with an axe and four oxen, and we won.

Brother Bill came first in the spring of 1903. He left home with one hundred dollars and came to Yorkton. Hugh Green had the hotel, and although he was a total stranger he cashed a cheque. He met the Vossens who had brought horses and their effects with them and trekked across the country to Watson.

Alex Thom had arrived at Quill Lake with equipment and needed a good man. Luckily Bill got the job, and was pleased with it and so was Alex. For Alex told me later he was the best hired man he ever had. When

the C. N. R. graders came nearer he took a job with them and helped bring the first mixed train to Watson, on which I was a passenger. It was two in the morning, April 8th, 1905. Jake Spring came to meet me with an old smoked up lantern, took me to a place he called a restaurant, gave me a bed on the floor where a dozen others were enjoying the same comfort.

Next, off for the homestead, but where? Here was where I met Joe Vossen sitting in a corner and trying to make music on the guitar which I brought along. He had met Bill and didn't know just where he was homesteading, but he must be just a little south-west of here. So I started off across the prairie, with my silk parasol, thirty two calibre revolver and guitar. I got as far as John Sommer, who had not heard of Bill, but said "Go south-west, you'll find a bunch of bachelors who might know him." They were the Wickenhausers, and said he lived five or six miles west.

Well, I didn't meet any bears, but talk about ducks, thousands of them, gophers everywhere and me blazing at them, it really was fun.

Finally, I saw Bill, he had five acres of nice black loam broken. One acre a day was the best we could manage with a twelve inch plow and four oxen. He was expecting me, so when he saw me coming he unhooked the oxen, gave them a kick and said "Go to grass and eat."

Then he invited me to his "house", logs of course, ten feet by twelve feet, with an earthern floor. It had a little cook stove, a few boards nailed to the wall for a bed, tick filled with hay, two boards for a table and a nail keg for a chair.

I took my mandolin out of my trunk, and on the lawn in front of our "mansion" we played "Home Sweet Home" together just as we did in Ohio.

Then things started to get hot in Watson, Thomas Schindler had already lost his hardware store by fire. Then one morning as I was out breaking Bill decided to go to Watson for more prunes and groceries. Before leaving he left a note on the table "Rice on soak, gone to town." Well it was well soaked, covered the dish and part of the table. When he arrived at Watson, Stritzel general store had burned down. Bill helped to build the store up again, and stayed on as a clerk, thus, getting his start in Watson. The salary was small, but he earned enough to pay board and supply me with grub while I kept right on tearing up the earth.

After two years I started trading oxen for horses and soon owned a nice team of blacks. Then I bought an old rubber tired buggy, reupholstered it, and painted the gear red and body black. So now I could show them real style.

Fenton McMahon taught the Korbel school and boarded with me. We

made for Watson to celebrate the foregoing event, took in a dance and going home we discovered the cook car on the C.N.R. side track, where the work crew was camping, was burning furiously. The bunk car in which the whole crew was sleeping also had a good start. After rousing them, we called the agent, who wired Humboldt for an engine to save the other cars. It could be there were a lot of little lives lost in the bunk car, but no human lives.

The next fire was Kielman's harness shop, on the spot where Lorne Stalwick has his office now. It was on the night of Frank Vossen's wedding dance, a real celebration it was, until a big storm came up. The dance went on, but Sandy Haycock and I getting a little nervous went up stairs where we could get a good view, and just in time to see a long streak of lightning hit the building. In a moment the flames were shooting out. We interrupted the merrymakers and all piled out in our best rags, pulled out the six-man pump in a drenching rain and extinguished the blaze.

Ernie Barshal had a barber stand in his pool room. Harry Cameron wanted a haircut during the terrific storm. Barshal refused to touch the scissors while it was lightning so Harry said "You are not afraid Jake, you do it." I started and when I had one side well done, bang it struck the station. We rushed over to find the agent lying on the floor stunned. It sure raised havoc with the office and the clock on the wall looked as though someone had blazed into it with a shot gun. We left the pool room open, but Barshal saw the light and closed it. We met after the excitement and got in and finished up the hair cut, the boys were playing pool and no boss around. Soon however, he came, after doing a lot of squawking about dulling his razor. Harry handed him a dollar and said "Now shut up, I've got a nice haircut."

The next fire was a hot one, the Western Canada Elevator. I could feel the heat from on top of my house on Railway Avenue, where I was brushing off burning shingles which the south wind was carrying over.

Next in line was Joe Muffenbeiers Confectionery, Ole Bragers Pool Room, and Smith Brothers Hardware, all three buildings were hooked together and went together.

Later the Smith Murphy Elevator caught fire at the very top and had already burned a hole through the siding, when Walker McIntyre and I went up the ladder, like squirrels up a tree, and put that out. But how? That is the fifty four dollar question. Down below the fire brigade stood by with the chemical, but helpless. Roy Ferguson said: "We can't reach that high." George Hall said "We can." Says Roy, "Don't break the acid bottle," George said "Do", then with an upper cut, a right and left from

Roy the bottle was broken.

Later the Widdifield and Green Livery Barn, also the town power plant (when Leo Hamers got badly burned) went up in smoke. The town then erected another fire hall, it also went with all equipment.

Smith Brothers then bought the Jake Guittard Livery Barn and carried on the hardware business until the present store was finished. Then we sold the barn to Alex Ketchen, who moved it down to east of Pete Sullivans, where it also was destroyed by fire.

Then an oil truck blew up on main street and nearly ruined the whole town. Scorched many onlookers, and sent thirteen of us to the airport hospital for twenty-six days. My eyes were swollen shut for three days, and seeing the light again ended my career as fire chief. The last two fires were the public school, and Schmitz's new Garage and Implement shop.

So this is the story as I remember it and as our old friend Dr. McCallum put it, "And I am sticking to it."

Now just a little reminder in closing, — did you ever try to spend only ten minutes every day and do nothing but think, and ask yourself a question like what did I accomplish today? What did I forget to do? What about tomorrow?

Had we done this during World War One when we were piling in carloads of hardware to avoid paying the skyrocketing prices and had we thought of doubling our Insurance we would not have been at the brink of insolvency. There was no forty-hour week then, and if you would like to know how many hours a day we put in just ask our faithful stand by Jake Bailey."

It might not be amiss to add a few lines to Jake Smith's story and say that Jake still has his home in Watson and continues to take an active interest in Community Affairs. When Mr. Smith retired from the hardware business, the management was taken over by his eldest son Melitus who continues to operate the business. Another son Barney built the Star Theatre and runs a modern picture show. The youngest son Ralph lives in Naicam where he also operates a moving picture theatre. A daughter, Mary K., (Mrs. Hood) lives in Kitchener, Ontario.

MILLS

Robert Mills came from England to the Watson district in 1903. He homesteaded nine or ten miles north west of Watson, and after the C.N.R. came through he was employed by the railroad in charge of the water

supply at Watson. While still living on the homestead it is said Mr. Mills used a bicycle to transport himself back and forth to his work.

During the first World War he went into the Watson Mercantile Store as manager for Malcolm Anderson. The store was taken over by Schwinghammer and Felix and Mr. Mills continued in their employ, later purchasing the store himself, which he operated till 1929. Then he sold the business to G. H. Cameron and purchased the store at Wimmer from Robert Bunyan. A year later Mr. Mills was appointed postmaster for Wimmer. He continued as postmaster in conjunction with the store till after World War II when he retired.

Bobby Mills is always cheerful and has a friendly word for all. Mr. Mills continues to have his home in Wimmer, spending the winters with his daughters in Alberta and Saskatoon.

MEMOIRS OF ROBERT L. MILLS

"A few of us including Mr. J. Crosland, sons Frank, Raymond and George left England April 22nd, 1903, for Canada with high hopes for the future. Inspired thoughts induced into us through immigration literature and letters received from Crosland sons, Jim preceded by eighteen months. We got in touch with the head of the Colonization Dept. in Liverpool and in a few weeks time were on our way.

"Yes, we were green, really green. We left what we called a small town of one hundred and twenty five thousand population, to eventually arrive at Yorkton. Here we went to see a Jim Peaker who hailed from a small village six miles from our home town of Suddenfield in Yorkshire. We stayed at the Balmioral Hotel in Yorkton when Hugh Green, then recently married, came to take over the management of that hotel.

The Great Quill Plains was then the boom district and we got a letter of introduction from Mr. Peaker to Alex Thom who was the Government Land Guide for this district and resided on a farm about one mile south of where the town of Quill Lake is now.

We started out by team via Springside, Theodore to Sheho. From there we struck across the prairie to Fishing Lake. At that time the Mulligans lived there, the mother, two sons and two daughters. They had a ranch house and it was used as a stopping place by travellers going west from there by trail south of what is now Wadena, by Clair to the farm of Alex and Harry Thom. We thought by this time we were doing fine and a day later arrived at the Ole P. Spaberg place and camped north of there on the land that was Charlie Spaberg's homestead. This was June 2nd,

1903. There we had to wait for Alex Thom to pick us up. Several others were doing the same thing. These were Jake Spring and his brother Frank with their families, Pete Barch and Tony with their father and mother (an elderly couple), Stephan Heilman, Philip Spring and Gottlieb Klotz, whose son Joseph was the first boy born on the east side of Iron Spring Creek in this district.

"We then set off with Alex Thom to look over the land. We met Paul Wacholtz and John Bettin, a couple of bachelors, and eventually landed where we homesteaded. The Croslands got Sec. 36, Twp. Rgc. 19, and I got a quarter on Sec. 24 in the same township.

"This was a new life to us and being enthusiastic was thoroughly enjoyed. Talk about mosquitoes; were they ever bad, because in those days there were many swamps and sloughs.

"After we had located we had to return to Yorkton one hundred and fifty-eight miles and file on our land. Well I remember Klotz turning his horse and buggy and heading for somewhere. We didn't know what the idea was but eventually learned he had spotted a good quarter section and was off to get first claim on it. We, with wagons and other vehicles, could not make as good time but drove longer hours. Joe Steinke passed us at Jim Praise's stopping house at Insinger. Charlie Praise said to me, "If you want to get ahead go over to the railroad, then in course of construction, and if you give the conductor a dollar you can ride down to Yorkton by six o'clock in the morning." This I did and went to get my forms fixed up at the land office and had just completed them when I walked Joe Steinke and wondered how I had arrived so early.

"I don't know that we gained anything as the land all appeared the same to a green bunch. We loaded up with supplies, some necessary and some not, but we got them anyhow, and pulled out for our new homes. All we had to go by after leaving the Quill Lake was the stakes on the sections of land and it was no small job for a bunch of greenhorns. Eventually we arrived home and lived to make a couple more return trips to Yorkton by team and wagon.

"In the spring of 1904 late in March, Bill Shaw and myself set off with a sleigh and team of oxen to Yorkton. This trip took twenty one days; we were quite happy about it all, just took it as part of the job. We left home at eight in the morning and it was six in the evening when we arrived at the Sebastian Sommer's place a mile south of Watson. We had to break trail and the oxen were up to their breasts in the snow most of the time. Some of the Edward Behiel's family were on the road going for seed. We met Ole Spaberg coming up with his family, having gone to pick them up at

Sheho. They had a covered outfit. At Fishing Lake Post office we got our Christmas mail, which at that time was our nearest post office. There were few bridges and we had to ford the creeks and often got stuck; this meant unloading and carrying the goods to dry land, then getting the wagon out and loading up again. This might happen more than once or twice a day. One thing I can say, you could leave part of your load beside the trail and return a few days later and nothing would be disturbed or a thing taken. Our mail came in spasms from Fishing Lake. Settlers coming through would bring it along. Just to show how honest the people were, Mr. Crossland got a letter at Jack Springs with eight five dollar bills enclosed. The envelope was worn through showing the money, but all intact.

“Ole Spaberg and Oscar Foster were about the first settlers to come in east of Iron Spring Creek, this was in the fall of 1902. They hired a rig at Yorkton and drove through and located their land. In the spring of 1903 they shipped their effects to Yorkton by train and the rest of the way by trail and were on the road most of the winter. Other than the Spabergs, were the Foster Brothers, Hans Hogan, John Howes, Olaf Overby, Gilbert Monsebroten and several others. Mrs. Monsebroten had a group of these early settlers for Christmas dinner in 1903, and a wonderful time was reported.

“Now we can say something of the building of the Canadian Northern Railway. We got work on construction, ditching mostly. While we were ditching at Wimmer, Wesley Bates and a man called Knutson were also on the job. The contractor took over from there to the east switch at Watson. The yard was put in by Oscar and Bennie Foster and from the west switch to the bridge over the Iron Spring Creek by Spabergs. West of the Creek the work was taken over by Otto and Olaf Overby, Lars Rustan, and Hans Hogan. This was done with oxen.

“Also included in the early group were Ole Iverson, a man called Bolten, who homesteaded the Kiefer place and later sold out to Kiefer. There were John Dahl, Bob Dickson, Bill Montgomery and Donald Murray who all were bachelors at that time. Farther west were a group of settlers that had come in by the way of Rosthern. Included in this group were Joe Hufnagel, his sister Mary and a brother Tony, (now a barber at Spalding), Leo Knafelc, Adam Fuerstenberg, M. Taylor, some of the Stromers and a man called Wild Bill Hevelsberger, who could really handle oxen. He drove an outfit of six and when breaking on the Steinke place we could hear him really talking to those cattle a mile away, and how. Others who came ahead of the railroad over toward the Englefeld district, whom we always considered pioneers were Paul Wacholtz, Nordick Brothers, Frank Kintz, Tommy Graf, Charlie Wicken, Jim Wicken, Jim Berry, Alex and Fred

McQueen and the Pitkas. There were others I have missed and must apologize because those who came ahead of the railroad and toughed it out should be remembered as the real pioneers.

"The first priests I remember of the Roman Catholic faith were Father Peter Windschiel, and Father Benedict, and Bishop Pascal of Prince Albert. There were always little acts of kindness in those days, one in particular I will never forget. We were camped on the creek south of where Pete Barch lived. He saw our tent and came down bringing us a large pail of milk.

We were very proud to be able to vote in the territorial election of Nov. 3, 1904. We had gone to town, four of us. The poll booth was in Hufnagel's store. The Deputy Returning Officer was standing around with an empty voters list. The Crosland brothers and I were the only ones eligible to vote. Allan J. Adamson, the banker of Rosthern, Liberal, defeated Chas Craig of Moose Jaw, by a big majority.

"February 3rd, 1904, Jim Crosland and I were going to feed up when we heard what sounded like a yell or a coyote howling. Jim grabbed the lantern and rushed down to the ravine where we found Wm. Tampa who was lost and going around in circles. He had been burned out at home losing practically everything. New lumber, cash, clothing and all belongings just getting away with his oxen and cow and was making his way to his friends place, Leo Knafelc, about two and a half miles from us at that time. Tampa had lost his mitts and had no hat or cap. We had located him just in time or he would have frozen to death. We took him in to the shack on Bill Shaw's place and fixed him up, keeping him overnight and he went on to Leo Knafelc place the next day.

The Klotz boy mentioned before was born in the bluff where we camped just north of Charlie Spaberg's shack the week of June 1st, 1903, and they christened him, as Mrs. Klotz said "Josef, (English Joe). When I saw the baby later and asked was it a boy or girl, Tony Hufnagel and Mrs. Klotz both laughed and said in German what sounded like "Oop Tipple".

Grace Monsebroten was the first girl born in the district.

ANTON GEYER

"Anton Geyer came to Watson from Marietta, Minn., in 1907, and filed on a homestead a few miles North of Watson. In 1910 he married Miss Laura Rude, and settled on the homestead where Mr. Geyer still resides. Mrs. Geyer passed on in the thirties. Their six daughters are all married and living in the district, while three of their four sons were married,

Lloyd being the lone bachelor. Mr. Geyer, known to everyone as "Tony", was noted among other things for his dancing and square dance calling and was always in demand at dances throughout the district and we think we are safe in saying that Tony in his long career has attended more dances than any other resident of the district."

LEO KNAFELC

Leo Knafelc, born in Austria, migrated to St. Cloud, Minn., in 1899, where he followed his trade as a baker for two years. In 1903 he joined the throngs who were northward bound at that time, and landed in Rosthern from which point he drove across country locating about ten miles north west of the present town of Watson.

In 1911, he married Miss Josephine Zupancee who also was a native of Austria. Following their marriage they located on Mr. Knafelc's homestead, where they successfully farmed until about 1947, when they retired to live in Watson.

Before the C. P. R. went North through Watson the Knafelc ranch provided a "home away from home" for the hundreds of farmers from as far north as LacVert and Kermaria who hauled grain to Watson. Any one seeking a meal or nights lodging was taken care of in some way, even if the floor did not make the most comfortable bed in the world.

Their family consisted of six daughters and two sons, Stanley the younger, served in World war II, while Joseph resides on and operates the old Knafelc farm. Their girls Mollic, Lostic, Mary, Agnes, Gertrude and Dorothy are all married.

ANTON BARTSCH

Mr. and Mrs. Anton Bartsch were born in Odessa, Russia, came to South Dakota in 1901, accompanied by Mr. Bartsch's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Bartsch and another son Peter. In 1903, the family left Ureka, South Dakota for the Canadian prairies, arriving at Yorkton, April 24th, of that year.

Like many of those early pioneers, they drove across country by team to what is now Watson, taking eight days to make the trip. On arrival they filed on a homestead a short distance north of what is now Watson, where they resided and farmed successfully until moving into town in 1938.

Mr. Pete Bartsch later moved to Salvador, Sask., where he died some

years ago. The Anton Bartsch family comprised of three daughters, Barbara, now a registered nurse, Regina, a teaching Sister and Susan who became Mrs. Thomas Aspel and now residing on the original Bartsch farm.

ADAM FUERSTENBERG

Mr. and Mrs. Adam Fuerstenberg came from Wisconsin, U.S.A., where Mr. Fuerstenberg was employed for a number of years as fireman with the Southern Pacific Railway, and later operated a farm there.

In 1904, he filed on a homestead about twelve miles North West of the present site of Watson. From Rosthern they drove by oxen-team to St. Peter's Abbey, where Muenster is now located. They resided on their farm until 1908, when they moved to Watson, where Mr. Fuerstenberg was first employed as section man with the C.N.R., for a period of four years and later for a period of eight years as janitor with the Canadian Bank of Commerce.

Their family consisted of five sons and three daughters, one son Bernard having served in the RCAF during World War II, most of his time having been spent in England and India. A daughter Patricia, also was in the Services and was stationed at Dundurn. Marie (Mrs. Dobmeier) lives in the Englefeld district, Anna, (Mrs. McIvor) lives in Perdue, Sask., Francis at Hudson Bay and Joseph at Victoria, B.C.

F. A. HINDERKS

"My dad, Herman Hinderks, took up four homesteads in the Watson District in 1905, about seven miles from town the way the crow flies. He was very much pleased with the location and the good land he had chosen.

"Our former home was Shakopee, Minnesota, a mixed farming district. Land at that time was selling from seventy five to one hundred dollars an acre. It would take a small fortune to buy land at that price, although crops were certain and the prices of grain and cattle were good. Taxes were high compared with taxes in Saskatchewan. A homestead cost ten dollars, filing fees and three years homestead duties. With fifteen acres broken you could apply for your deed for one hundred and sixty acres. Taxes on a homestead could be worked off by doing road work, no cash needed. Only a couple of days with a team of oxen, a breaking plow and a slusher, and you could work on your own road leading to town. Two of our neighbors from Shakopee had already located in the Watson District before dad came here; they were

Charles Strunk and John Hamers, who helped dad locate our homesteads.

"In the winter of 1905-1906 arrangements were made to immigrate to Canada. Two of my older brothers were to leave in March to erect buildings on dad's homestead and I was to go in June after the spring work was done. The word homesteading had not been used in Minnesota for years and I didn't know the meaning and what it all involved in a new unsettled country. I was anxious to go on my adventure and see that homestead that probably would be worth seventy five or one hundred dollars an acre. (Later).

I landed at Watson on June 24th in 1906, with two heavy suitcases. Mother had packed clothes, jars of fruit, jars of pickles and boxes of her favorite cookies, for her three boys on the homestead that didn't know how to cook or bake bread. I checked my suitcases at the hotel, then decided to have a look around. I walked through the backyard of the hotel and came face to face with two bears. I didn't stay there very long. I hadn't noticed that they were chained to stakes. I walked up what is now main street, at that time a wagon trail. Ox team's were hitched to loads of lumber, settlers effects, and machinery. What I couldn't understand was, where did they get all the oxen from? There was the old team of horses, but oxen predominated.

I met John Hamers pushing a bicycle loaded with groceries and parcels. I was glad to see him for I knew that his homestead wasn't far from ours. We started off, Mr. Hamers pushing his bicycle and me lugging two suitcases. There was a trail partway to his place which zigzagged around bluffs and sloughs. At Hamers we had lunch and then cut across country, without a trail, for our homestead. On our way we saw several coyotes, badgers, bears. Coyotes were not afraid of human beings, they would trot off a few rods and then turn around and look at us.

"My brothers had built their shack alongside of a poplar grove that was to be a windbreak for the cold winter months, and a summer resort for millions of mosquitoes. However, it was to be our home for two years, some times very sad, and again very amusing, depending on how the meals turned out. The bread we baked the first few weeks was indescribable. Mrs. John Hamers came to our rescue by volunteering to do our bread baking which we accepted gladly. Mother used to make rice pudding with raisins, so we tried that just once. I remember getting a lot of rice for fifty cents, and the way it turned out fifty cents of rice would have been half enough for a small army. We had a small tin kettle, that we filled three-quarter full with rice, added water and raisins to what we thought would be a good mixture, put a tin pie plate on for cover, set it on the stove and waited for developments. It didn't take long till the lid started to bob up and down

and at few kernels of rice and raisins trickled overboard. We started dipping some out, but it came right up again. We had dipped out more than what had been put in in the first place. That was a real rice party if you ask me.

"We dug out a den of young coyotes and took one home to be tamed. He was chained to a poplar tree with a light dog chain and leather collar. We killed rabbits for him and set a basin of water in his reach but he wouldn't touch anything for days at a time. It was useless trying to tame him, but we kept him all summer and by late fall he was almost full grown. At night he would howl and start all the coyotes in the neighborhood howling with him.

"My oldest brother went back to the States to help with the harvest, to return with dad in the fall with a car load of horses and cattle.

"John Hamers had a threshing machine shipped in and got ready to do the odd jobs of stack threshing. My brother and I went along to pitch bundles, wages \$1.25 per day, moves from one place to another were deducted. Moves didn't mean just across the road, some moves we made were from eight to ten miles, and the old steam engines would travel only two miles per hour, some speed to what we travel on rubber today.

"We left one Sunday afternoon to help a settler do his threshing, six miles west on John Pitka's farm, leaving our coyote, that didn't want to be tamed, with several rabbits and water. After we started threshing we noticed the farmer dragging a coyote which he shot because he was chasing the chickens. It had a short piece of chain around it's neck. It was our pet coyote that had followed our tracks that Sunday night or early Monday morning to the farmer's yard.

"During the late fall a prairie fire started several miles south of the place where we were threshing. The wind was from that direction and the fire was spreading fast. We were worried as we had no fire guard around our buildings and hay stack. We decided that I should go and bank up the shack with earth and clean the dry brush and grass away from the barn and haystack. When I got home the fire seemed to be several miles away, so I started working around the buildings. I stayed up all night, the sky was all lit up and clouds of smoke drifted over the tree tops. Towards morning the wind shifted to the north west and I knew then that there would be no immediate danger, so I went to sleep. I was still sleeping when John Wickenhauser, who knew we were out threshing and that our buildings were in danger if the fire got there, came to plow a fire guard. I certainly was glad to see him. It just goes to show how the early settlers were concerned of the welfare of their fellow neighbors.

"I made a lunch, while the oxen ate hay at the haystack. After dinner

we started to plow. We made several rounds when we noticed something walking through the bluff near us. It would take a few steps then stop and look at us, it looked like a deer walking on its hind legs. I said, "John what is that," He answered "Don't know."

"It really was a wierd looking object, and no fooling. It came straight for us and we saw it was a man whose coat, pants and cap were made of deer skins. He had a long white beard and wore dark rimmed glasses. He spoke to us in the Belgian language but we couldn't understand him.

I went back to the threshing outfit which was at Jake Smith's. He had land in the Korbel district, and lived close to Englefeld. He boarded the crew at Tony Kolling's place, also in the Korbel district. Jake took several of the boys to his place for the night where we would spend most of the evening harmonizing songs such as, (The Bull Dog on the Bank). I don't know how far it was. Jake had two horses and one was lame, they could go fast enough to suit us over a prairie trail. We would get there sometime during the night, have a sing song, go to bed and sleep a few hours, get up and jolt those unending miles to be back in time for breakfast.

"We had one more settler to thresh for in that district by the name of L. Billmeyer. My budy's folks lived about two miles away and in a large log house. He asked me to go home with him for the night, as his sisters were helping at another place and would not be home so we could sleep in their bed. We started out after supper across country, no road or trail. It is surprising how this lad could find the way around bluffs and sloughs to his home. His folks had all retired when we arrived but his Dad heard us come in and told us to take the bed in the kitchen, which we did. We were tired and must have fallen asleep as soon as we hit the pillow. However, during the night the girls came home. We heard them come in, they were whispering to each other while getting ready to crawl into their bed. We didn't make a move and were wondering what would happen. Buddy and I really were in a tough spot. It didn't take long till the older one came to bed, took hold of the blankets and noticed that someone was there. She let out a yell and ran for the other room. The younger one following, calling for pop and mom. We heard them talking and laughing in the other room for awhile, then silence.

"The rest of the gang made their beds in a log barn with a sod roof, but the logs weren't chinked or plastered. The settler kept his chickens in this barn. "Only a few chickens" the boss said, "They won't bother". At three o'clock one old rooster started crowing and kept at it. Our separator man got sore and threw one of his boots at him and knocked him off his perch,

it was quiet for awhile, then Mr. Rooster started again. The men said they would like to have him cooked for dinner.

"We had five more jobs to do, and long moves. These settlers were Mr. Behiel, Sr., Alphonse and Fred Behiel, and Jacob Auchstaetter. From Fred Behiels homestead we moved to our last job two miles north east of Watson on the Bowman homestead.

"Dad arrived the latter part of October with our first settler's effects. He had been on the road for seven days from Shakopee to Watson. He brought three horses, a saddle pony, and three cows. The rest of the car was filled with machinery.

"Dad had bought all new machinery the year before we left and had used it one year to make it duty free entering Canada. We noticed everything you bought here at that time was much higher in price than it was back home. For instance a six foot binder cost \$125.00 and in Canada the same make and size was \$185.00; also other items as coffee, 12½ cents per pound roasted, and in Canada 25 cents unroasted. Beer 5 cents with lunch, and in Canada 10 c and no lunch. These were only a few of the items that we noticed and it was probably due to the fact that transportation rates were higher, and some had been hauled in by team from Sheho or Rosthern. We were glad to have our horses to haul our needs, instead of using oxen. There were other settlers unloading at the platform when we unloaded our car. One settler said his homestead was about twenty miles S. W. of Watson, we were glad to have our homestead so close to town. I can sympathize with those that had to haul all their belongings on wagons across country without good roads in summer and worse in winter. I was told by one old pioneer that many horses died in the trail to Sheho and one could consider himself lucky if he got back with the same team he started out with.

"Dad stayed with us over the 1906-1907 holidays, he had been our cook and house keeper during that time, and didn't like it any more than we did.

In the summer of 1907 my oldest sister decided to come and keep house for us. We wrote her and advised her not to come for fear she would get lonesome, although we needed a cook and housekeeper badly, especially on washday and that wasn't very often.

"I can remember the first wash day I had and it wasn't funny. I put a wash tub of water on the stove to get hot, and had the dirty clothes piled up near the stove so as to have everything handy. When the water was near boiling point I put in all the clothes the tub would hold. I didn't know that dress shirts had to be washed separately. I had dress shirts, everyday shirts, underwear, several pairs of socks. Then I added a bar of soap and waited for it to boil, I started to stir it around with the broom handle,

but the water looked as though it was turning into cheese or buttermilk, so I added more soap, and kept on stirring. Was that ever a mess! I let it boil some more then took tub and contents outside to cool off, after it had cooled I wrung it out and hung the clothes on willow bushes to dry. I was going to do another batch but figured I had better wait and see how the first turned out. It was a good day for drying wash. The socks were as hard as a shiplap, the shirts were worse, the underwear I stood up against a bush and it wouldn't even sag. I was told later that alkali water was the cause. (No rinso in those days).

We had never heard of alkali before. Dad had ten acres of breaking done on his homestead by a settler, which we seeded to oats. The oats grew to about four inches high and died out. The man that broke this land might have known that it was alkali but he never told us. It was easy breaking, no bush, the only piece of open land on Dad's homestead, the rest of the land was heavy timber and willow bush.

My sister took over housekeeping for us, and we were glad to be relieved of that chore. It rained the first few weeks. I can remember of one instance on a rather cold and windy night my brother, sister, and myself were sitting by the stove talking and listening to the wind howling around the shack, and the odd little creaks that a new building with ends of tar paper sticking out on the corners would make in a storm. Later on we noticed something rubbing against the wall but did not pay any attention, until the rubbing noise got close to the kitchen door. When it got there it sounded as if it was going to push the door in. My brother opened the door to see what it was and noticed it was a furry thing. He closed the door in a hurry and grabbed the rifle that was on a nail close by the door. Soon we heard some one say "Are you home". It was Paul Wickenhauser, wearing his fur coat, he had looked through the window, saw us sitting there, and was going to give us a little scare, and he sure did. It was quite a joke but could have been fatal.

"In the fall of 1907 the rest of the family got here, fourteen all told, ranging from five years up to fifty five years in age. My oldest brother twenty five, my youngest brother five, I was nineteen. We were six boys, five girls, dad and mother and Uncle John who had been with us ever since I can remember. We were at that time the largest family in the Watson district.

"Settlers with families were coming in every day. Several located close to us so in the winter of 1907-1908 the Early Dawn School was organized and building was started in the summer. Tony Koller was the contractor. In 1909 he built St. Oswald's Church. We parishioners helped where ever

we could. We brought an organ from back home and whenever services were held we loaded the organ on a wagon, or sleigh, and took it along, and after the services loaded it up again and took it home. Mr. Louis Koenig was our first organist and Choir master. The parish decided to buy an organ but didn't have sufficient money on hand. Settlers at that time were hard up with practically no income. However, Joe Ackerman and myself were asked to drive around and see the parishioners personally for a donation toward buying this organ. We drove all day with a horse and buggy and collected the magnificent sum of one dollar and thirty cents. However, during the next winter we gave suppers throughout the district and took up silver collections and got enough to buy that organ, which is still in the church.

"Better times were noticeable when settlers got breaking done and some grain threshed to sell. The money was used for improvements on buildings, horses, cattle, machinery and what not. It took money and hard work to make a homestead a home. The first few years there was a lot of frozen grain, due to the late variety and rich soil. A lot of experimenting had to be done to get seed that would mature in the short seasons. Thanks to those experimentalists who gave their valuable time in producing the early-maturing and rust resistant wheats that made Saskatchewan a famous wheat-growing province.

FETTERS

The Feters came to Canada from Russia in 1903, and lived in or near Winnipeg till 1905. There were four brothers: Philip, Adolph, Paul and Robert. They came to Saskatchewan in 1905 and first located in the Prairie Rose District. The land there appeared mostly swamp and hearing there was desirable land farther north towards Watson the four brothers all obtained homesteads eight miles southwest of Watson, and south of Early Dawn School.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Philip Fetter died in the early twenties and none of their family resides in the district.

Mr. and Mrs. Adolph Fetter, now deceased, continued to make their home at Romance and after retiring from their farm they moved to Watson. Their sons Adolph Jr., Edward and Joseph are all established farmers in the Romance and Leroy districts.

Mr. and Mrs. Paul Fetter moved to the town of Watson in 1940 where they have made their home. Since then their farm is operated by their sons Herman and Paulus. One son Edward runs the Massey-Harris business in Watson. Raymond lives in British Columbia.

Mr. and Mrs. Paul Fetter's family consisted of the four sons mentioned and six daughters who are all married. On one occasion Mr. and Mrs. Paul Fetter were in Humboldt with all their family and a prize was offered that day for the largest family in town and they had the honor of winning the prize. It is said that Paul Fetter walked to Humboldt and returned in one day at the time he filed for his homestead.

Robert Fetter left the district in 1934 when he moved to the western coast where he has since resided.

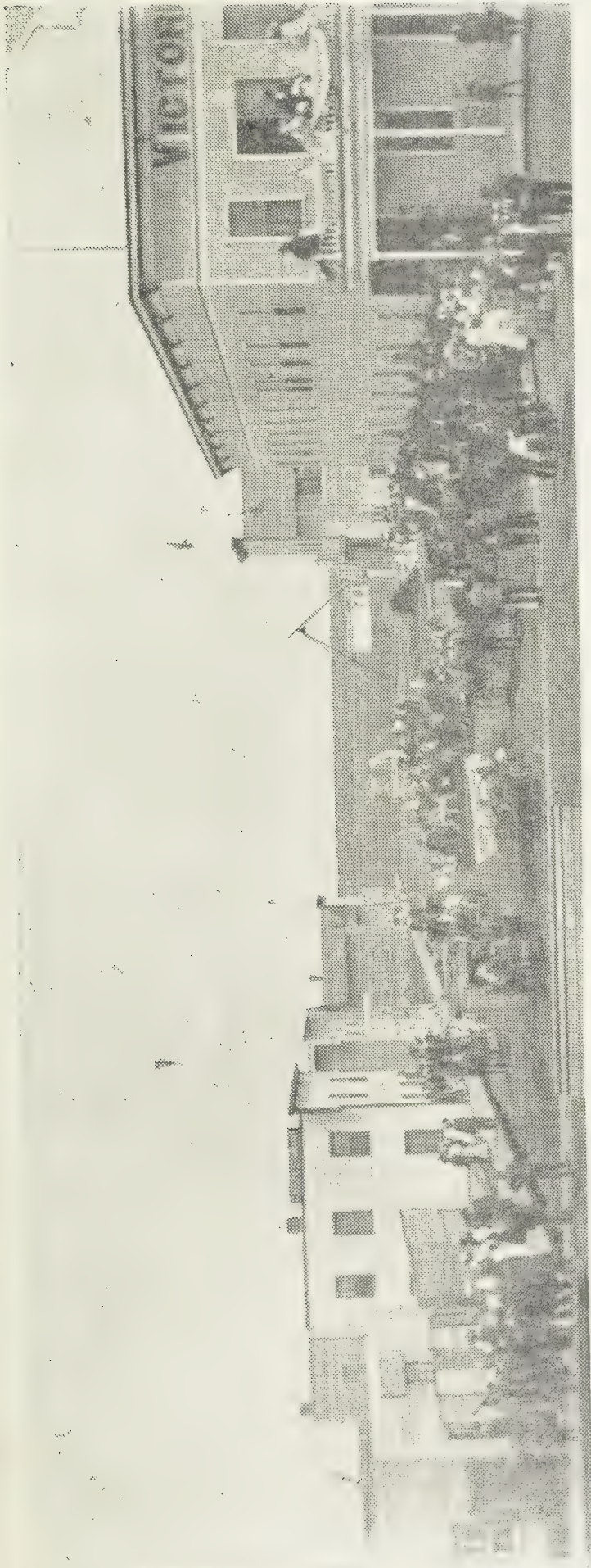
J. H. WILKES

J. H. Wilkes and family came from the state of North Dakota in August 1904. This was the year the railroad came through and the townsite for Watson was established.

Mrs. Wilkes was the first woman to live in Watson and it may truly



Watson Brass Band of the early days, with Rev. Fr. Bernard as Band Leader.



Watson's first Sports Day, 1907

be said she has seen the town and country develop. Joe Haskamp opened the first Lumber yard in the town and J. H. Wilkes was the first manager. Mr. and Mrs. Wilkes built the first restaurant and dwelling house from the first car of lumber to arrive.

Mr. Wilkes writes that John Bettin was appointed Government Land Guide and assisted the settlers in locating available land for homesteads. Joe Hufnagel built the first store somewhere near where the King George Hotel now stands and J. Spring built the first livery barn. Hayward and Haycock built the King George Hotel in 1906. Thompson and Parsons operated a private bank located near where the Star Theatre now stands. In 1906 the Bank of Commerce started business

in a building near where Hobbs implement is now located and the Bank of Commerce building was constructed in 1907. Mrs. Wilkes says **the first sports day was held in 1907, a parade led by the brass band** with floats and all the trimmings. Henry Ebbing drove a float with a mule and an ox hitched as a team. Miss Edith Hayward was Queen and rode with the Prince and Princess in one of the floats after which they danced the Maypole. Nels Dale acted the part of a clown and Mrs. Wilkes says he made a good job of it.

The first wedding in the district was the marriage of John Sommer to Miss Mary Langheim, the ceremony took place at the Sebastian Sommer home, a mile south of Watson where Henry Sommer and family now live.

The Priest came from Muenster to tie the knot. The wedding celebration was held several weeks later when the couple had completed their new dwelling house. The music for this event was supplied by Charlie and Hans Hogan.

Mr. Wilkes writes that on one occasion in midwinter supplies were running low. Sebastian and John Sommer drove to Melfort by team through deep snow. Since there were no roads they had to chop their way through the timber in places. It required three days to make the trip one way, however, no one was discouraged and all was taken cheerfully.

Mr. Wilkes continued to reside in and near Watson till his death in 1942. He proved up a homestead two miles south east of town and farmed for a number of years. He operated a dray in Watson and was carrier for the first Rural Mail route to operate from Watson. Mrs. Wilkes has her home in Watson. One son Martin now lives in the State of Montana. A daughter Anna, Mrs. Henry Sommer, lives near Watson.

T. J. GORMICAN

T. J. Gormican was born in Ontario and moved with his parents to the State of North Dakota, when a small child. There he went to school and grew to manhood. Tom taught school for a period in Dakota before coming to Saskatchewan in 1905. He homesteaded in the Irish Colony, now the Sinnett district. He was married there to Mary Anstett, and came to Watson in 1907 as agent for the British America Elevator Co., a position he filled for more than thirty years. Mr. and Mrs. Gormican were always active in church and community affairs. Mr. Gormican was mayor of Watson for a longer period than any other incumbent. His Irish wit and salty humour have added zest to many gatherings.

Mr. and Mrs. Gormican's family consisted of two sons and two daughters. Both sons served overseas in the Second World War. Vernon in the Army and Orville in the Air Force. Both have since located in British Columbia. Gladys is Mrs. Oswald Heidgerken and lives in the town of Humboldt. Lewine lives in Saskatoon.

T. F. SCHINDLER

T. F. Schindler came to the Watson district in March 1905. Mr. Schindler was a native of Minnesota where he worked on farms and later taught school. He went to the State of South Dakota and engaged in

business there. Having known the Wickenhausers and Vossens at Cologne, Minnesota, he came to Watson primarily to visit them and see the country. Since he had been an experienced fur buyer he found plenty of furs to purchase in Saskatchewan and started in the business here. The same year Mr. Schindler was joined by his brother Harold Schindler and they purchased the lumber yard and hardware in Watson from the Great Northern Lumber and Supply Co., also the Lumber Yard at Quill Lake. Mr. Schindler obtained a homestead only one mile west of Watson where he lived the first years and which he still owns. In June 1907 he returned to Norwood, Minnesota, where he married Miss Ann Lindert. They returned to Watson to make their home. In 1910 Mr. Schindler built a residence in the town. This property is now owned by the Ole Brager family. Mr. and Mrs. Schindler continued to live in Watson until 1916, when he sold the lumber business to the North Star Lumber Co. and then purchased a home in Saskatoon, where their two children were educated. Mr. Schindler still resides there, Mrs. Schindler having passed away in 1946.

After disposing of his lumber business in Watson. Tom Schindler engaged in the real estate business with the late F. J. Vossen and settled people on much of the rich bush land north and east of Watson. In fact Mr. Schindler still has interests in the district. The Schindler's only son Quinton studied medicine and became a Medical Doctor, and practices his profession in Alberta. Their daughter Vivian is married and lives in Winnipeg.

Much credit has been given to Tom Schindler for his part in keeping the town of Watson solvent during the early years. Mr. Schindler had been through the hectic times of the nineties in South Dakota and knew what could happen in a new country if a municipality plunged beyond its depths financially. His attitude of caution on the Town Council of Watson no doubt had something to do with the town's splendid financial condition during the depression years, when many municipalities were in great difficulty.

A. E. HUFNAGEL

A. E. Hufnagel came to the Watson district from the state of Wisconsin in 1903. He had filed on a homestead north west of Watson, through the St. Peter's Catholic Society in St. Paul, Minn. Tony came by way of Rosthern and trailed across the country from there with oxen and what machinery and other effects he had on the wagon. Mr. Hufnagel had with him a discharged Coventry Officer named Valentine Loeb. There were no

trails so they travelled in an easterly direction and were stuck in the sloughs many times. After travelling for three weeks, one hundred and thirty five miles, they reached the site of their homestead. Tony mentions camping one night near Mt. Carmel. Mr. Hufnagel returned to the United States that fall going by way of Yorkton with a team of horses owned and driven by Paul Wacholtz. In the spring of 1904, Tony returned as far as the steel to Sheho, and with a pack on his back walked from there to his homestead. Tony relates the snow was about three feet deep and the going was tough. He stopped one night at the Alex Thom home and the next night at the Spaberg farm and made it to his own place the following day. He states that in 1904 part of their potatoes froze in the ground on October 10th. Mr. Hufnagel farmed for a number of years and for a time worked as a barber in company with Mr. Barshell in Watson. Tony later farmed near Lake Edward, east of Spalding. While on his homestead he helped organize the Rose Bush School District, and was the first Secretary-Treasurer. Mr. Hufnagel also proposed the name for the school which was adopted by the Department of Education.

After the coming of the C. P. R. and the village of Spalding was formed, Mr. Hufnagel started in the barber business which he still operates.

JOHN HOWE

From the information available John Howe was the first person to settle in the Watson district, with Hans Hogan a close second.

Data is not available to write a biography of Mr. Howe. However, he homesteaded on the South west quarter of Section 10, Range 18, about four miles south east of Watson. This farm is presently owned and occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Bill Sookeroff.

John Howe didn't remain in the district many years and in 1910 when the land companies were bringing in home seekers he sold his homestead. Mr. Howe is reported to have spent some time in Alaska, however. He made his home in Foam Lake, Sask., for many years and only recently, during the winter of 1950-1951 he died there at a ripe old age.

Unless someone comes forward with prior claims we dedicate to John Howe the honor of being the first settler in the Watson district.

P. O. SPABERG

P. O. Spaberg came from Grafton, North Dakota in Sept. 1902, as one of the very first group of settlers that trekked across the country by team from Sheno. Mr. Spaberg homesteaded on Sec. 10, four miles south-east of Watson on the same section as John Howe.

Mr. Spaberg's sons, Pete, Charles and Oscar all found homesteads near their father's. They brought considerable horsepower and farm equipment to the country with them. Their land was mostly open prairie and being familiar with the prairie land in Dakota they soon brought a big acreage under the plow. In 1905 they had some wheat seeded by April 8. The Spabergs acquired additional land besides their homesteads and during their years in the district perhaps shipped more grain from Watson than any other one farm in the district.

In the year 1910 the Spabergs sold their land, live stock and equipment to Lamb Brothers of Indiana and moved to the state of Montana. Pete Spaberg married Alice Burdick. There were two Spaberg daughters; Sophia married Robert Burdick, and Hannah is Mrs. Oscar Hagen. After a few years part of the original Spaberg holdings came back into possession of the family. Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Hagen took over part of the land and lived there till recently. They retired and moved to Watson. At present the farm is operated by their son Harry, a grandson of the late P. O. Spaberg.

C. J. BURDICK

C. J. Burdick and family were among the early settlers in the Watson district having moved in from the State of Minnesota. They lived on a farm north east of Watson, where Mr. Burdick also did carpenter work.

About 1914 Mrs. Burdick moved to Watson and operated a boarding house. A few years later the Burdicks purchased the building on the corner south of the Watson Town Hall and rebuilt this into a hotel which they operated for many years. Following Mrs. Burdick's death in 1928 the business was continued by Mr. Burdick till the late thirties, when Mr. Burdick retired and moved to British Columbia. The Burdick property is that now occupied by Wing's Cafe.

Mr. and Mrs. Burdick's family consisted of two sons and three daughters. Carl Burdick died overseas at the time of the First World War. Robert Burdick married Sophia Spaberg and they moved to Montana where he died. A daughter, Alice, married Peter Spaberg, and moved to Montana.

and Muriel married Henry Larson and lives in British Columbia. Armenia Burdick became Mrs. C. Carlson and lives in the Sylvania district.

JOHN HAMERS

John Hamers was one of the early settlers in the Watson district. He came from Minnesota with the Wickenhauser Brothers and located a homestead south west of Watson on the same section as the Paul Wickenhauser farm. In 1905 Mr. Hamers was joined by his family.

When Mr. Hamers' health failed the family moved into the town and he died in 1916.

Mrs. Hamers did practical nursing in the community. The eldest son Leo developed considerable ability as a machinist and was one of the first to start in the garage business in Watson. This was at the time when the automobiles were just beginning to play a part as a means of transportation. The same shop continues to be operated by a brother Sylvester (Tuck). Another brother Charles is in business on Vancouver Island. There are four daughters, Angela, Mrs. George Kiefer, Mildred, Mrs. Frank Blanchard, Alice and Lena are registered nurses. Lena is at present matron of the Watson Union Hospital. Alice is married to Dr. Abramson and lives in the States. Leo moved to The Pas, Man., in the thirties and operates a theatre there. Mrs. Hamers continues to reside in Watson.

ALLAN BYERS

Allan Byers located on a homestead sixteen miles south of Watson, where he farmed until 1926 when he moved to the town of Watson and worked as a black-smith for twenty years. Then Mr. Byers did an unusual thing. He sold his blacksmith shop and returned to his original farm which he still owned, and continues to operate to this date. (Note: We have just received word that Mr. Byers died Oct. 16 and was buried in Watson, Oct. 20.)

HARRY HYDE

Harry Hyde moved in from Ontario in 1910 and located on a farm fourteen miles south of Watson near the Dafoe Airport. He followed mixed farming with considerable success. Mr. and Mrs. Hyde both passed away in the early forties and the farm is operated by their only son James Hyde. They had two daughters Blanch, married Tom Faye and lives in the States and Elma is Mrs. Bert Fletcher of Quill Lake.

ARNE NABSETH

Arne Nabseth was one of the group of early settlers that came from the State of North Dakota. Mr. Nabseth arrived with his family in 1906, and settled on land nine miles south west of Watson where he has since made his home.

Mr. Nabseth has retired from active farm work and the farm is operated by two sons Raymond and Alvin.

The eldest son Clarence Nabseth, a small boy when his parents came to Saskatchewan, has been engaged for many years as manager of the Watson Rural Telephone Co. Clarence, with Mrs. Nabseth, has charge of the switch board as well.

OTTO H. WAELTI

One of the first to set up business in the town of Watson was a Swiss watch maker, Otto H. Waelti. Mr. Waelti carried on his trade in the town through the early years and at the same time proved up a homestead north east of town in what is now the Daphne district.

One son, Otto Waelti, Jr., farmed in the Westasta Valley community up till 1949 when he with his family moved to British Columbia. The eldest daughter Leah, Mrs. Harry Hansen, passed away in 1924. Two other daughters Mrs. Alva Gourly and Ella, Mrs. Lester Croswell, lived in the district until recent years, when both families moved to British Columbia.

Mr. Otto Waelti died in British Columbia during the winter of 1950-1951.

GEORGE and HUBERT BOHNEN

George and Hubert Bohnen were from the State of Iowa. George came to Saskatchewan in 1903, and Hubert in 1904 and both homesteaded north of Watson near Daphne. Hubert's wife was Josephine Theimen. Both Mr. and Mrs. Bohnen have always taken an active part in school and community affairs and their home was for many years a centre for summer picnics and community gatherings. They continue to reside on their original farm. Their family consists of three sons and one daughter. Two sons operate a garage at Daphne.

W. H. SPROULE

W. H. Sproule was born at Shelbourne, Ont. He came west to Manitoba as a young man, to the Watson District in 1905, and established his homestead in the old Ardath district fourteen miles south of Watson where Mr. and Mrs. Sproule raised their family and continued to make their home until Mrs. Sproule's death in 1947.

There are four sons in the Sproule family and all are established farmers in the community near where their father homesteaded in 1905, Howard, Borden, William Jr., and Barry. Mrs. Howard Sproule was Ida Caser before her marriage. Mrs. Borden Sproule was Leona Ludwig. William served with the armed forces overseas in World War II, and was married in England, returning home with his bride after the war. One daughter Esther, Mrs. Walter Shultz became a registered nurse and now lives in Detroit.

Mr. W. H. Sproule now retired makes his home in Watson.

JOHN and AUGUST BETTIN

John and August Bettin who came from the State of Minnesota to the Watson district were among the early settlers.

John Bettin located homesteads for himself and brother in 1903. August Bettin moved his family to the homestead in 1905. John Bettin became associated with Joe Vossen in the implement business, later taking over the business himself. He married Mary Vossen and they made their home in Watson till Mr. Bettin's death in 1918 during the time of the influenza epidemic. There were two sons, Joe is in the employ of the C.N.R. as agent and Bernard joined the Canadian Air Force prior to the Second World War and has continued in that service. Mrs. Bettin has her home in Watson.

August Bettin continued to reside and farm his original homestead till after the last war when the farm was taken over by his sons Edward and Aloysius. Mr. Bettin made his home in the town of Watson until his death in 1948.

One son, Wendolyn, paid the supreme sacrifice in the last war. Fred Bettin is now manager of the King George Hotel in Watson. Another son, Tony, is associated with the Co-operative Creamery in Swift Current, Sask. There were three daughters Mayme, Mrs. August Weber, lives in the town of Watson, Helen, Mrs. H. Poyner, now resides in Toronto and Bernadette, Mrs. G. Cruickshank, lives in Regina.

BEHIELS

Edward Behiels and his family of three sons and three daughters came from Belgium as immigrants in the year 1899, and located near Edmonton, Alberta. After remaining in Alberta for about three years Mr. Behiels and sons Alphonse and Fred came to the Watson district and obtained homesteads in 1903. They came in overland by way of Rosthern.

Mr. Behiels and his son Alphonse obtained homesteads five miles south and west of Watson, and Fred Behiels ten miles to the southeast.

Alphonse worked on the construction gang when the C.N.R. grade was being built.

Edward lived on his homestead till 1913, when he purchased a farm adjoining Watson on the South and moved there. He died in 1915.

Fred took over his father's homestead where he and Mrs. Behiels raised their family and made their home till Mr. Behiel's death in 1948. Mrs. Behiels continues to make her home on the farm which their only son Bernard operates. There were four daughters, Margaret is married and lives in Ontario. Mary, Mrs. Albert Schonwald, lives in Watson, Lena, Mrs. Peter Kazakoff and Leona, Mrs. Robert Jacobs all have their homes in the Watson district.

Alphonse sold his original homestead in 1914, and moved to his father's farm near Watson where he continues to make his home. Mr. Behiels is now retired. The farm is operated by his son Joseph.

The Behiels sisters, daughters of Edward Behiel, Sr. are Mrs. Joseph Ackerman, deceased, Mrs. John Lonize of Watson and Mrs. Peter Deschryver of Romance.

VOSSEN

Perhaps no family name is more closely associated with the early days of the Watson district than Vossen.

Two brothers Frank J. and John Vossen came ahead of the railroad with their families in the spring of 1903, and were among the group that trekked overland from Yorkton that year.

Frank Vossen, Sr. homesteaded about four miles north of Watson and established his home where he lived till his death in 1928. The first Post Office in the Community was called Vossen and was located in their dwelling. The post master was Frank J. Vossen, Jr. A store was also set up in one room and was operated by Mr. J. Hufnagle.

Mr. Vossen had six sons and all came with him to Saskatchewan and obtained homesteads in the same neighborhood except the youngest, Herman. For a few years one son, Joseph, was engaged in the implement business in Watson, and then moved to Saskatoon. Eddie Vossen moved to Oregon, John Vossen Jr. was engaged in the livery business in Watson during the early years and died there in the early thirties.

Frank J. Vossen Jr. was not only the first post master in Watson but continued as such till after the close of the First World War. Frank was associated with T. F. Schindler in the real estate business for many years.



First General Store and Post Office

Mr. F. J. Vossen, Jr., Postmaster, left; Mr. Joe Hufnagel, General Store, owner, right.

He managed the North Star Lumber Co. and later purchased the King George Hotel which he and Mrs. Vossen (Sadie Merkle) operated till Mr. Vossen's death in 1944.

Harry Vossen lived at home till after his father's death in 1928 and then moved to British Columbia and has since been engaged in the rail-roading business. The youngest son Herman continues to live on the old Vossen homestead with his family. Herman's wife was Mary Thacyk. Their four daughters Mary, Mrs. Bettin in Watson, Josephine, Mrs. Louis Walby living in Ontario, Ida, Mrs. L. Armstrong resides in British Columbia and Theresa, Mrs. Strosser.

John Vossen Sr. located in the same neighborhood north of Watson, and his sons are all established farmers in the same community.

DAVID GOURLEY

David Gourley was a native of the state of Pennsylvania and came to the Watson district with his family consisting of Mrs. Gourley and two sons and three daughters in the year 1906.

The Gourleys located on land about six miles north and west of Watson where they made their home until 1919, when Mr. and Mrs. Gourley and daughters moved to California.

David Gourley was Reeve of Spalding Municipality for several years, and was active in Agricultural and Live Stock work. The eldest son Frank established his farm in the same community and was prominent as a breeder of Percheron horses and short horn cattle. Mrs. Frank Gourley was Bertha Bergman before her marriage. After the last war Mr. and Mrs. Gourley moved to the town of Humboldt, and their sons Daryl and Homer took over the farm.

Alva was the second son, and he farmed the old Gourley place till the year 1948, when he sold the farm and with his family moved to British Columbia.

Alva Gourley was also interested in raising good live stock and maintained herds of cattle and hogs.

Mrs. Alva Gourley was Hilda Waelti before her marriage.

HETLAND

Mr. and Mrs. John Hetland came to Watson in 1906 with four small children and sixty seven dollars.

Mr. Hetland being an invalid, Mrs. Hetland rented a house on Railway Ave. known as the Sheridan house and started serving meals to support her family. In 1907 the Hetlands built the Alexandria house and continued in the boarding house business.

Mr. Hetland died in 1908.

O. N. Waelti opened his jewelry shop in the Alexandria house, also a colored barber Mr. Torbett. Mrs. Hetland continued to operate the boarding house till 1918 when she sold the place to J. H. Peterman. Mrs. Hetland and her two sons Harold and Joseph, who were now grown up, started farming in the Spalding district and another son Edwin and a daughter Ina continued in school. Edwin Hetland is a lawyer in Minneapolis, and Ina married Gilbert Howme of Camrose, Alberta. Harold continues to farm in the Spalding district, and Joseph farmed in the Naicam district until 1949 when he was elected to the House of Commons representing the Federal Constituency of Humboldt. Mrs. Hetland died in 1927.

LOCKINGER

The Joseph Lockinger family homesteaded in the Spalding district during the year 1905. Later they purchased a farm two miles north east of Watson which became their home till recent years.

A son Fred Lokinger was killed overseas in the Last World War. Two sons Robert and John are farmers in the home district. A daughter Pauline is Mrs. Morley Lonsberry and resides in Watson.

Mr. Lokinger died in the state of Washington in 1948. Mrs. Lockinger now resides in Alberta with a daughter. Also a daughter, Marjorie, is married and lives at Drumheller.

OLE BRAGER

Ole Brager came from the State of Minnesota when a young man and homesteaded near Lake Edward in the Spalding Community in 1905, where he continued to live until 1910 when he moved to Watson and started barbering. A few years later Mr. Brager purchased the Watson Pool Hall which he continued to operate till 1946, when he sold the business and retired. In 1919 Mr. Brager married Mabel Gillund.

In 1943, a son Kenneth, who was a Pilot Officer in the R. C. A. F. was killed overseas. A daughter Donna, Mrs. Hodings, resides in Winnipeg.

Ronald also lives in Winnipeg. Mr. and Mrs. Brager and Gordon still have their home in Watson.

PETER DESCHRYVER

Peter Deschryver came to Saskatchewan in 1905, as an immigrant from Belgium. He worked on construction crews for the C.N.R. for two years out of Humboldt. Mr. Deschryver returned to Belgium in 1907 and remained there for about a year when he again came to Canada and resumed work for the C. N. R. out of Watson and Humboldt. In 1912 he was married to Sadonia Behiels. Mr. Deschryver started farming near Watson during the First World War. In the year 1921 he purchased land near Romance and moved to his farm there where he still lives.

Mr. and Mrs. Deschryver are now retired from active farming and have their home near the post office in the hamlet of Romance.

The Deschryver family consists of three sons and one daughter. The eldest son, Philip, is in business and resides in Leroy. Edward and Alphonse are farmers in the Romance vicinity. Their daughter, Mary, is married and lives in Winnipeg.

SULLIVAN

Peter Sullivan, a native of Pembroke, Ont., came to the west in the early days. It is said he worked with surveying crews about the time of the Riel Rebellion. Later he went to Sisseton, S. Dakota where he married and came to Watson with his family in 1905. He took up a homestead about four miles north of town. Mr. and Mrs. Sullivan built a home in Watson where Mr. Sullivan started in the dray business and the family lived on the homestead a part of the year to meet the homestead requirements.

Peter Sullivan continued to operate the Watson dray for thirty seven years, and no more familiar figure than Pete on his wagon in the summer and sleigh in the winter, was seen in the town. Always big fat horses were a part of his outfit. Peter Sullivan died in 1940. Mrs. Sullivan continues to make her home in Watson. Peter Junior was associated with his father in the dray business and is now retired and makes his home in Watson. The younger son Jack went into the garage business with the late Alex. Ketchen. At Mr. Ketchen's death he took over the entire business. He now operates a modern garage and machine shop in conjunction with the Cockshutt Implement Agency.



NELS DALE

Nels Dale was another one of the first to arrive. He walked eighty six miles from the railroad at Sheho. Mr. Dale had as a travelling companion, D. T. Gainey. Nels says he had a sugar sack on his back as luggage and that was empty when they arrived.

Where Watson now stands, says Mr. Dale, it was all creeks, lakes and small bush. However, Nels was one who stuck and says homesteaders in the community were like one big family. He was a carpenter by trade and it is believed he built or helped to build nearly every building in the new town.

He mentions that the first church services were held at the Jake Spring home about three miles north west of town on what is now the Albert Kintz farm, that he opened the first barber shop and pool hall in the town located where the Massey Harris shop now stands, and J. Spring opened the first restaurant close by.

Nels writes that the worst part about the weather those first winters was, it was so cold it took two or three days to extinguish a lamp or lantern when once lit.

Nels Dale married Mary Williams and they later moved to the village of Englefeld, where they continue to make their home.

BAILEY

W. H. (Jake) Bailey came west from Ontario in 1906. In Watson he associated himself with Malcolm Anderson who had purchased the store built by Joe Hufnagel. This building still stands and is presently occupied by the Watson Cafe.

Mr. Bailey took up a homestead in the old Bogend district near where Leroy now stands. He continued in the merchandise business in Watson between times while doing his homestead duties.

In 1911, Mr. Bailey married Alvern Wilson and they lived on the homestead where they farmed till 1919, when they moved to the town of Watson. Mr. Bailey followed the trade of a painter for many years and also acted as agent for men's made-to-measure clothing. For many years Jake was caretaker for the Watson Curling rink during the winter months.

Mr. and Mrs. Bailey had one daughter Norma, Mrs. Woods, now residing at Carmen, Manitoba. One son, Jack, also lives at Carmen.

Jack Bailey served in the Canadian Army during the last World War.

He participated in the Dieppe raid and saw much active service later. Mrs. Bailey died in 1950, and Mr. Bailey continues to make his home in Watson.

BUSTIN

Anton Bustin moved from the state of Minnesota with his family in the year 1905 and homesteaded about three miles north east of Watson where he farmed and made his home till his death in the late thirties. He carried on mixed farming, and greatly increased the acreage.

The family consisted of seven sons and four daughters. Six Bustin boys are established farmers in the Watson District. The youngest, Raymond, operates the old home place where Mrs. Bustin makes her home. One son, Aloysius is a mechanic and has his shop in Watson. Two daughters are married: Mrs. Wm. Lukenoff, and Mrs. Schmidtkemp, Christine and Ethel live in the Watson district.

SOMMER

Sebastian and John Sommer came from near Springfield, Ill. and homesteaded near Watson before the railroad in 1903. They came by the way of Rosthern and trekked across the country by team and wagon.

Sebastian Sommer's farm was only one mile south of Watson where he continued to live till the farm was taken over by his son Henry, who with his sons continue to operate the old homestead along with additional land. Sebastian made his home in the town of Watson, till his death in 1948. Mr. Sommer had two daughters, Mary, Mrs. Jos. Mutenbier, and Elizabeth, Mrs. Henry Langheim.

John Sommer after proving up his homestead did not continue as a farmer. He was town policeman in Watson for several years.. He also worked at the implement business and various other jobs. John Sommer with his family returned to Illinois some time prior to 1920 where he still resides.

BIGGS

Edward Albert Biggs was a pioneer of the Watson district. He was a native of Ontario and lived in Manitoba when a young man. He homesteaded four miles north east of Watson in 1908 where he continued to reside till his death in 1945. Mr. Biggs was one of the few early settlers to go in for sheep raising.

The eldest son Henry and his mother continue to reside on the original homestead. Three other sons: Philip, Edward, and Roy are all farmers in the Watson District.

PALMS - GIERL

John Palms and John Gierl moved from the state of Missouri and located on land ten miles south west of Watson in 1906. In 1917 John Palms sold his land to the Rossiter family and purchased a farm six miles south of Watson where he continues to make his home.

John Gierl moved to the town of Watson in the twenties, and was associated with F. J. Vossen in the North Star Lumber Yard till his death in the early forties. A son Ed. Gierl is a farmer in the Romance district. A son, Jack, lives in B. C.

BRAGET

Carl and Conrad Braget were among the settlers that came to the Watson district from the state of North Dakota and located homesteads nine miles south west of Watson. Conrad Braget returned to Dakota after a few years. Carl Braget later purchased land five miles south of town and closer to school, where he continues to reside. A son, Carl Jr., now carries on the farm work.

WENSCHLAG

Mr. and Mrs. Emil Wenschlag and family came to the Watson district in 1906 from the state of South Dakota. Mr. Wenschlag settled two miles east of Watson where he purchased land. He and two elder sons Richard and Oscar obtained homesteads in the district. Mr. Wenschlag farmed with oxen in the early years.

In 1911 the Wenschlag family moved into Watson and operated a dairy for seven years. Mr. Wenschlag ran the Watson livery barn 1918 to 1934.

Mrs. Wenschlag died in 1928, and Mr. Wenschlag in 1936. The eldest son Richard moved to Alberta. Oscar lives in Watson and has delivered water in the town for many years. Clarence and Leonard own and operate the Watson Dairy and have supplied the town with milk. A daughter, Mrs. P. T. Carroll also resides in Watson.

JOSEPH PASTL

Joseph Pastl immigrated from Germany to Manitoba in 1905, and came to the Watson district in 1906. Mr. Pastl homesteaded five miles north of Watson.

Mr. and Mrs. Pastl were married in 1907, Mrs. Pastl coming from Germany at this time. They continued to reside on their farm for nearly forty years when they moved to British Columbia and their son Joseph Jr., took over the home farm. The Pastl farm is recognized as one of the most modern and well equipped places in the district.

A daughter, Mrs. Frank Weber, (Mary) resides in the town of Watson, Mrs. Chas. Kerchmer lives in Kelowna, B.C., Mrs. Tommy Stokes, lives in Vancouver, B. C., Mrs. Budd McIntyre lives in Widewater, Alta., and Alfred lives in Chicago.

WALBY

The Walby Brothers, Joseph and Louis were among the group that came to the Watson district ahead of the railroad. They were natives of the state of Ohio.

Joe Walby homesteaded north west of Watson where he continues to make his home. Mr. Walby married Katherina Vossen. Their sons carry on the farm operations.

Louis Walby farmed for a number of years and later worked as a carpenter in the Watson district, later moving to Ontario.

WINAND

Peter Winand arrived in Canada from Malberg, Germany, in Winnipeg June, 1903. He arrived in Watson March 1905 and took a homestead at present M. Illeck farm. He returned to Germany in March 1908 to marry Katherina Schulte. They returned to Watson homestead in 1908; moved in Sept. 17, 1917 to the present Winand farm, one mile west of town where they remained until Mr. Winand's death in 1949.

They raised a family of eight, six of whom are still living. Frank and Henry live at Watson, Mrs. Mackie, LePas, Man., Mrs. Schleper at Muenster, Mrs. Leo Nordick at Englefeld, and Mrs. Don Hinderks in Saskatoon, Sask.

He served his community in the capacity of trustee for the Sacred Heart

Church and Separate School for thirteen years. He served as Telephone Director and also on the Local Wheat Pool committee.

PUTNAM

Mr. and Mrs. Putnam came from the state of Iowa, purchasing land five miles south of Watson in 1910. They proceeded to become citizens and endeavored to do their part in all community enterprises. Their family was raised and educated in the Province.

There were three sons and three daughters in the family. All three boys served with the armed forces in the last war. Lloyd as a Lieutenant in the Army. Max in the Airforce who perished in action overseas. Joe served in the Airforce. One daughter Helen is presently secretary to the Deputy Minister of Labor in the Provincial Government, a daughter Marian, Mrs. D. H. Bray lives in Victoria and Jean, Mrs. R. J. Cook lives in Ontario.

During the early years when travelling was all done by team, weary men and horses often found the Putnam home a handy place to warm and rest both man and beast.

Mrs. Putnam has always been active in women's work such as the Ladies Aid, Hospital Auxiliary, etc., Ben Putnam has always been a live-stock farmer. He served as President of the original Watson Rural Telephone Co., helped organize the Quill Plains School and served as first Chairman of Board of Trustees. He was also President of the old Watson Agricultural Society for several terms. He was Wheat Pool Delegate for his district for three terms. Mr. Putnam carried on as an auctioneer in the Watson district for twenty five years. He was elected to represent the Humboldt Constituency in the Provincial Legislature in 1944 and served in that capacity till 1948.

"The Bridge Builder"

"An old man going a lone highway
Came in the evening cold and gray
To a chasm vast and deep and wide.
The old man crossed in the twilight dim,
The sullen stream had no fears for him,
But he stopped when safe on the other side.
And built a bridge to span the tide.
"Old man," said a fellow pilgrim near,
"You are wasting your strength with building here;
You never again will pass this way,

You've crossed the chasm deep and wide,
Why build you this bridge at evening tide?"
The builder lifted his old gray head,
"There followeth after me today
"Good friend, in the path I have come," he said
"A youth whose feet must pass this way.
This chasm which has been as naught to me
To that fair-haired youth might a pitfall be,
Good friend, I am building the bridge for him."

J. H. PETERMAN

Among the early pioneers were Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Peterman who came to Watson in 1907, from Clifford, Ont.

The Petermans at one time operated a butcher shop in Watson, Mrs. Peterman being the assistant butcher, and old-timers will remember how in those days she could throw a quarter of beef over her shoulder just as easily as the next man. On disposing of his meat business, Mr. Peterman went into the Automobile business, taking on the Chevrolet agency for the district. Mr. Peterman was town-policeman for many years, and also held many public offices. He was a member of the first baseball team back in 1910 and was an ardent curler and was one of the charter members of the Watson Curling Club.

Prairie Song

The open prairie shall be my home
With wheat in golden acres growing;
For winds that over the blue sky roam
Can find no farmland fairer showing;
And green the coulee where the cattle graze,
And black the earth that wealth of grain can raise
On humming fields in harvest days,
With merry faces tann'd and glowing.
From far-off countries our fathers came,
Their faith in this new land declaring
And built their cabins of simple frame
Their implements with neighbour sharing.
The children learned to read in country school;
The days were busy and the hands were full;
There was no time for heart to cool,
Each hour its happy burden bearing.

NEW CANADIANS, UKRAINIAN SETTLERS

While not pioneers in the Watson district, as we have defined the pioneers, a group of people of Ukrainian extraction first settled in the Watson district in the early twenties. They located mostly east of Watson, and have played an important part in the development of this portion of the district. They were good judges of land and selected farms that proved highly productive. Many of the farms settled by these people was timber land, and was brought under cultivation in the hard way, before modern clearing machinery was available.

Among the first families of this group to locate here were the Wm. Prosko family, Peter Strelic, the Boyko's, Martin Hleck, Pete Derniuk, Tom Romaniuk, and a few years later Louis Polowich, Keneschuk Brothers, Nick Franko, and others settled in the same neighborhood. These people or their ancestors had emigrated from that part of Russia known as the Ukrain and some from Poland. As farmers in the Watson district they have become prosperous, many have developed fine homesteads, modern buildings and up to date improvements.

They have always taken an active part in community affairs and made every effort to have their children take advantage of the educational facilities of the country. Many of the younger generation have gone beyond grade schools and on to University, and are filling responsible positions in business and professional circles.

The older generation were mostly of the Greek Orthodox faith, and in 1949 started a church in the town of Watson which, when finished, will be far the most imposing church edifice in the district up to this time.

A community hall east of Watson, known as the Ukrainian Hall, has served as meeting place and community centre for many years. Outside of persistency with their church affiliation this group of people are no longer recognized as such but are completely assimilated and a part of our Canadian way of life.

THE DOUKHOBORS

About the turn of the century several thousand people in Russia known as the Doukhobors, who in reality are a religious sect, sought refuge in Canada. They had stacked and burned their firearms in Russia and took a stand against war and blood-shed. The Canadian Government of that day gave certain assistance in concessions in locating these people in Saskatchewan. Among other privileges granted was exemption from military service. Their

headquarters was located at Veregin. This group was lead by Peter Veregin (The Lordly) as spiritual head. They operated on a communal basis and the property was held in common, and all worked for the common good and were supplied from the general pool. As time went on some became dissatisfied and desired to go on an independent basis. After a time those who so desired were given their share of the substance and set out on their own. Early in the twenties some of the families of this group bought land and settled in the Watson district. They were hard workers, frugal in their way of life and were able to get along during the depression years better than many other people.

The older generation were non-meat-eaters and the women wore a distinctive garb; some were also opposed to education and shied away from sending their children to school. However, those who settled in the Watson district were all co-operative as far as schooling was concerned and their children have taken their places beside all other school children and achieved for themselves distinction in many instances.

The Doukhobor people excelled as gardeners and some raised gardens well worth going miles to see.

Among the first families of this group to settle in the Watson District were Nick Zeebin, the Vanjoffs, Eli Sookeroff, the Lukenoff Brothers, Nick Salikin, Fofenoff Brothers, Fred Kazakoff, and Fred Popoff.

THE McCLOUD OUTFIT

Early in the spring of 1913 four huge gasoline tractors were unloaded at Watson. A company organized at Minneapolis had obtained possession of a tract of land northwest of where LeRoy now stands and proposed to operate on what was a large scale farming scheme for this district.

They proposed to do spring breaking of prairie land and seed flax, the same year. Spring breaking and cropping the same year was never sound farm practice in the Watson District but was sometimes practiced by the early settlers in order to get a few acres of feed and seed to take them over the first year.

The new company constructed portable buildings mounted on truck wagons to be used for office and living accomodations for the working staff. On a fine spring day they started from Watson in a south westerly direction, the way the crow flies, toward the scene of operations. There wasn't much in the way of graded roads to the southwest in 1913. The low places were wet and soft and the heavy tractors soon mired down through the prairie sod. However, they did reach the place where their land was located, and

they did break some prairie sod and seed some flax, but the scheme was doomed to failure from the start. Before harvest time it was apparent there would be little to pay the large overhead that had developed. In August the same year a sale was called to dispose of the small tools and loose chattels around the camp. The day of the auction the big tractors were gone, as were the manager and staff. The only person in sight that seemed to possess any semblance of authority was the local manager of the Canadian Bank of Commerce. Some person or persons must have sunk considerable money in this project. To what extent the Bank of Commerce was involved, if at all, was never known to the public. This was the only attempt at large scale syndicated farming ever attempted in the Watson District.

THE CANADIAN BANK OF COMMERCE

Watson Branch

In November 1906, a staff of three men arrived at Watson to open a branch of the Canadian Bank of Commerce. This first staff consisted of W. E. D. Farmer as manager, W. T. Smart as teller and Thos. Kennett as the rest of the staff.

The first place of business was a room in the Victoria Hotel, now the King George Hotel. They later moved to a small building a little north of the hotel. This building is still standing on Mrs. Bettin's property and used as a wood shed and summer wash house. The present Bank building was constructed in 1907. This building is still quite an imposing structure and compared with the buildings that were in Watson in 1907 it must have appeared something of a temple. The new building was given proper recognition when completed. The old timers recall, that a huge dance was held in the building before the fixtures were moved in; also a banquet was given where considerable formality prevailed in dress and procedure.

A private bank had functioned in the town prior to the coming of the Bank of Commerce. This was run by B. K. Thompson and H. Parsons. This naturally folded up when the chartered bank took over. There were one or two efforts to get another bank to come in but without success.

The Watson bank has had several managers during its life time in Watson and scores of young men and women have been members of the staff for a period and moved on to other places. W. E. D. Farmer has been mentioned as the first manager and was succeeded by Henry Kerr. Mr. Kerr is remembered as having a major part in the organization of the Watson Agricultural society. He was the first Secretary Treasurer of that organization and continued as the head while he remained at Watson. Mr. Kerr

also built the residence that has since been the home of each succeeding Bank Manager down to the present time.

R. P. Findlay succeeded Mr. Kerr in 1912. He was followed by Mr. Marcon who came during the First World War. Mr. G. L. Nash was the next manager who was followed by J. W. Oliver, who remained as Bank Manager at Watson longer than any other incumbent. He remained almost twenty years. Mr. J. E. Collier followed Mr. Oliver and was succeeded by David Sheddon. Mr. H. Hurst took over when Mr. Sheddon left in 1949.

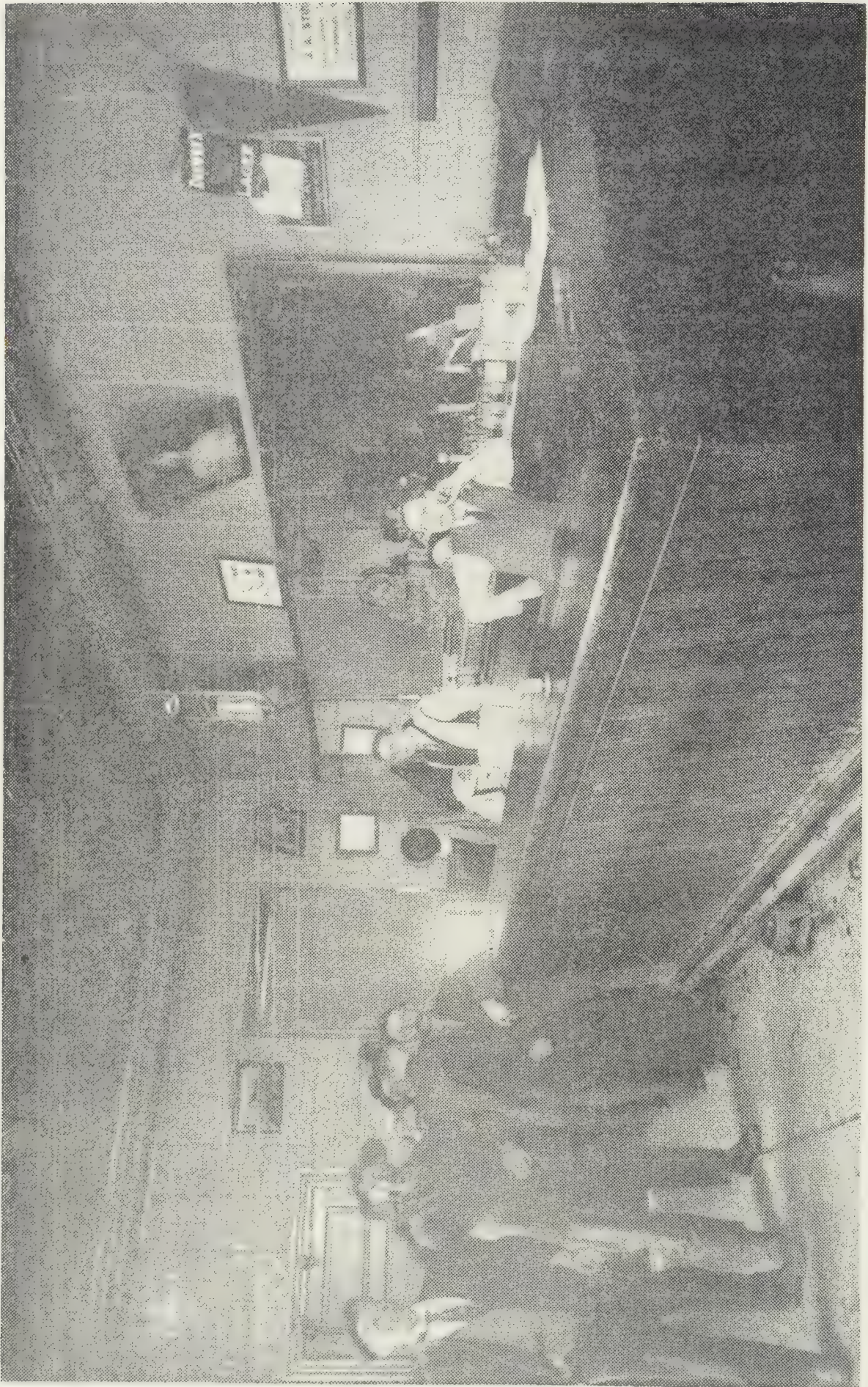
Some managers were more popular as bankers with the public than others. However, all were good community citizens and were always anxious to do their part in any movement that promised advancement for the district.

KING GEORGE HOTEL

The Victoria Hotel was built in Watson in 1903. The first owners S. M. Haycock and Thos. L. Haywood operated the hotel till 1910 when H. A. Green from Yorkton purchased the property and the name was changed to the King George Hotel. Much of the social life of early years centered around the King George Hotel. Before the town hall was built dances, lectures and concerts were held in the Hotel Dining Room.

The Hotel has changed management many times and has been remodelled almost as often. Mr. and Mrs. Green operated the hotel till 1915, when Mr. Green sold out to one Joseph Tice from Minneapolis. Mr. Tice stayed a couple of years when Mr. and Mrs. Green again took over and continued until 1925. Dar Jim then became the proprietor and managed the hotel till the early thirties when F. J. Vossen purchased the property and added improvements and gave the place a general face lifting. Mr. and Mrs. Vossen ran the hotel till Mr. Vossen's death in 1943, after which the property was purchased by Pat O'Mara. Mr. O'Mara made further alterations and improvements and after two years disposed of the property to Mr. Wm. Smith, who only remained one year when he sold to Mr. Steve Sawchenko. Mr. Sawchenko operated the business for two years and sold to a firm of Hotel men from Winnipeg in 1950, Mr. Calof, who hired Mr. Thomas Jones to Manage. Mr. Jones resigned after a year and a half and Mr. Fred Bettin is the present manager.

The King George Hotel at Watson has always been recognized as one of the good small town hotels in this part of the province and has served the needs of the public well almost since the town of Watson came into being.



King George Hotel about 1914. Joe Tise, Proprietor

THE WATSON AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY

DIRT FARMER

He finds beauty among these simple things,
The path the plow makes in the rich red loam,
Gay sun gold, in ripe wheat, plover's wings,
With the tinkling of a cowbell on the Way Home.

He treads the soil with earth love in his heart,
Watches the young crops spring from fertile ground,
Loves the warm rain, that makes the peach bulks start,
Land and a man in close communion bound.

Much of the credit for the formation of the Watson Agricultural Society is given to Henry Kerr who at the time was manager of the Watson Branch of the Canadian Bank of Commerce.

The first meeting was called on August 10, 1907. The records show that Doctor McGorman acted as chairman. S. Y. Bullis was chosen as the first President and Henry Kerr was Secretary-Treasurer. At the first annual meeting Mr. Kerr was elected as President and Mr. Mercier took over as Secretary-Treasurer. The first annual fair was in the fall of 1907. The first board of directors consisted of G. H. Cameron, John Bettin, J. W. Gordon, T. J. Robinson, B. K. Thomson, H. C. Parsons, G. W. Wilson, Henry Johnson, T. Hayward, W. S. Rombough, John Howe, James Nelson, J. Guitard and N. Herriges.

For twenty five years the Watson Agricultural Society was an active organization and sponsored many activities in the interests of Agriculture. The Annual fall fair was the major event and much good live stock was brought from far and near for this event. During those years horses were the major source of power on the farms and considerable pride was taken by many stockmen in producing good horses of different types. There were always classes for beef and dairy cattle, as well as for sheep and swine. Grain, grasses and vegetable exhibits were always prominent at the Watson fairs. Dairy exhibits, canned fruits and fine arts all contributed to make the annual fairs a meeting place of interest to all the people of the community.

The Agricultural Society sponsored a number of boys' judging teams at the Regina and Saskatoon Exhibitions. They also held Poultry shows and seed grain exhibits in the winter for several years. During the early years the society sponsored growing grain competitions and grew improved varieties of wheat and oats under contract to be distributed to farmers of the district at cost. An annual rally was held for many years in the town

hall in February or March. These meetings were usually featured by a speaker from the University and a variety programme by local talent, followed by refreshments and a social hour.

When the depression years of the thirties descended, it became more and more difficult to finance the organization and with the extremely low prices of live stock and all farm products the farmers lost interest in attempting much in the way of improvement by exhibits and competitions; also with the advent of the automobile and better roads the people were inclined to attend the larger fairs and the small town fairs went out of style.

While Agricultural Society was never disbanded it became dormant about 1935. No doubt there is still a place for an organization of this sort in the community and there has been talk of attempting a revival, as yet nothing of a tangible nature has taken place.

In looking back through the twenty five years the society did function, the early settlers can see that the Watson Agricultural Society played quite a prominent part in the developement of the Watson district. Mr. Bullis and Mr. Kerr have been mentioned as the two first presidents, those who followed were R. P. Findlay, G. H. Cameron, Ben Putnam, M. A. Sylvester, D. Gourley, R. B. Langdon, L W. Wilson, Alex Ketchen and D. J. Murray.

WOLCH'S STORE

Wolch's Store in Watson is one of the oldest merchandizing businesses to operate under the same family name in the town. In 1909 Wolch Brothers, Thomas and Fred came to Watson looking for a business opening. In 1910 they started business in a small building on the site of the present store. As time went on they enlarged and modernized the place. After the C. P. R. line came through to Melfort, Wolch Brothers opened the stores in Leroy and Naicam. A few years later Fred Wolch retired from the firm and the Naicam and Leroy Stores were sold and Thomas Wolch continued to operate the Watson Store. By this time it had become Wolch's Department Store with stock and services that compared favorably with city stores. In 1943 Joe Wolch, a nephew of Thomas Wolch, purchased and took over the management of Wolch's Department Store. Joe Wolch has been aggressive as a community worker, the same as in his business. He took an active part in working for the establishment of the Watson Union Hospital, and was chairman of the first Board of Management. Joe has been president of the Watson Board of Trade for several terms.

After forty years of service to the public, Wolch's store is an established fixture in the district.

WATSON UNION HOSPITAL

For many years the people of the Watson district felt the dire need for local hospital accommodation. At different times individuals and organizations had toyed with the idea of doing something about the matter. Following the end of World War II, the Watson Board of Trade decided the time was ripe for action. The territory was mapped out, legal requirements were complied with and the vote was approved for debentures.

At this time the post-war shortage of materials was at its worst and many delays were experienced in the construction work. Nevertheless the spring of 1947 saw the hospital completed and patients admitted. June 15, 1947, was set as the day the Watson Health Centre would be dedicated.

On a fine Sunday afternoon two thousand people assembled at the New Hospital site and heard the Honorable T. C. Douglas, Premier of Saskatchewan, deliver the dedication address.

The Watson Union Hospital is rated as a twenty bed establishment. It is equipped with most of the modern facilities that medical science has to offer.

The Saskatchewan Government through the Department of Public Health has given generous assistance by grants and loans. Individual contributions assisted materially and different ladies' clubs in the community have done much in the way of supplies and special equipment.

Dr. A. V. Goldstein, has been Medical Superintendent since the hospital opened. His skill as a surgeon and habits as a man have won the confidence of the people. Miss Lena Hamers has served as Matron for several years. The first Hospital Board consisted of Joe Wolch as president, Nick Franko and O. A. Hagen as members of the Board.

Prior to the establishment of the present modern hospital and back in the early history of the town, the needs of the sick were well taken care of through various private nursing homes.

Among those homes was one located where the Zoboski Store now stands and operated by Miss Jennie Higgins, now Mrs. Hugh Watt. We can recall that this home was in operation during the scourge of the flu in 1918. With every available bed occupied, and nurse Higgins and Staff working overtime.

Mrs. J. H. Wilkes for many years conducted a nursing home on 2nd street East, in the house now occupied by the Ryckabosch family.

Mrs. Norman Wood, now residing in Vancouver, for some years ministered to the sick in the former Oscar Soderlund home, located on

number six highway, not far from the present hospital. This place, was later taken over and operated for several years by Mrs. J. Hamers, and her daughters Alice and Lena.

In addition to nurses above mentioned, we recall one other in the person of Nurse Lillian Holderness, who though not operating a home, did play an important part in this field and teamed up for several years with Dr. D. D. McCallum in ministering to the needs of the sick.

Miss Holderness, later married Mr. Carl Hinderks who passed on a year ago. Mrs. Hinderks still lives in Watson district.

We feel that a great deal of credit is due this valiant band of nurses who so faithfully and well carried on under very adverse conditions. Compared with the hospital of to-day, they had very little equipment, no sewage system, no running water, and back in the early days no electricity. In those hospitals, as a rule, there was usually only one shift which at times ran twenty four hours. In addition to looking after their regular patients, those nurses were very often called out to nurse a patient in a private home, all of which was done cheerfully. And again, in those days, the financial standing of the patient was not investigated as is done to-day, with the result that frequently a patient, unappreciative of the service he had received, walked out with his account unpaid.

THE WATSON WITNESS

Not many weekly newspapers in Saskatchewan can boast of being published by the same family for forty-five years. However, this is true of the Watson Witness established by the late G. H. Cameron in 1907.

Mr. Cameron had been a printer and publisher in the east before coming to Saskatchewan. G. H. Cameron was born in Nova Scotia in 1862, he was a school teacher when seventeen years of age. After teaching a year or two he joined the staff of the "Aurora" published in Antigonish, Nova Scotia by Reverend Father McNeil, who latter became Archbishop of Toronto. At the age of twenty one, Mr. Cameron went to Boston and for eleven years worked at his trade of printer, after which he again taught school in Nova Scotia. In 1902 Mr. Cameron moved to Lyam, Mass., where he established his own printing business. He had long had his eye on Western Canada and when his business was destroyed by fire in 1907 it seemed a good time to move. He had no particular place in mind in Saskatchewan to locate but when he reached Watson it appeared to be a place that had a future. Mr. Cameron was publisher of the Watson Witness till 1930, when he purchased the Watson Merchantile General Store. At

this time his daughter Rebecca took over as editor of the paper. In 1940 Rebecca was married to Herbert Vossen and together they continue to operate the publishing business. They have recently modernized their plant, installed a linotype machine and enlarged the weekly paper.

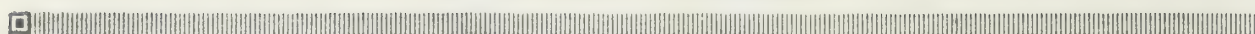
G. H. Cameron, outside of his business undertakings, was Mayor of Watson for nine years and served on the Town Council for four years. He was also President of the Watson Telephone Co., Secretary of the Watson Board of Trade, and Warden of the Anglican Church. Mr. Cameron died in 1946. Mrs. Cameron and two other daughters Jennie and Flora reside in Watson. One son George lives in British Columbia.

THE WATSON AND DISTRICT BOARD OF TRADE

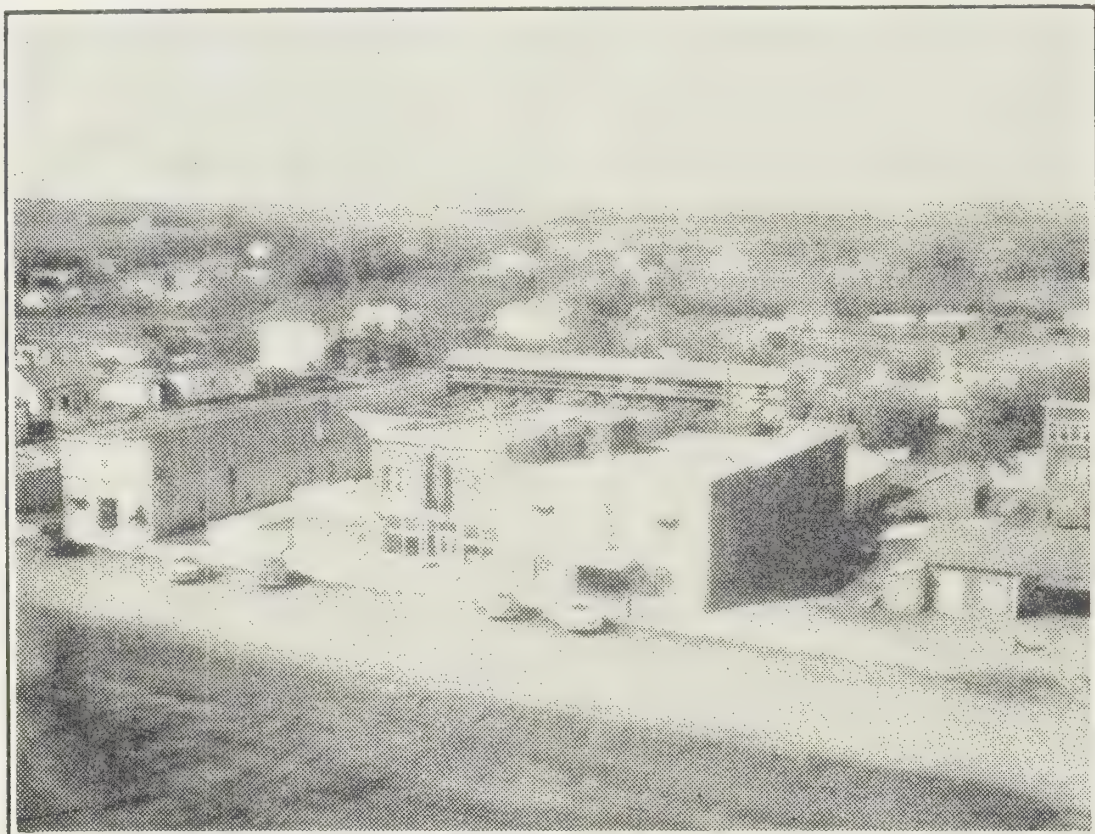
By L. D. Walmsley, D.D.S.

Although the Watson and District Board of Trade was re-organized in October 1944, primarily to secure a hospital and doctor for the town of Watson, the organization had the usual high ambition for accomplishment and furthering the interest of the town. As former Boards of Trade had perished through lack of activity, Mr. Wm. Smart made a motion which was passed that the Board of Trade take over the duties of putting on the Town Sports Day. This has had a great effect on the Board of Trade as it provided it with an outside source of revenue. At their monthly meetings they took over the Overseas Cigarette Fund, The Honour Roll, The Honor Certificates acknowledging the debt to Service men and as the war came to a close it was only natural to think of a War Memorial to those who served.

In consequence, at the regular monthly meeting December 22, 1945, Mr. Rea made a motion seconded by Mr. Hobbs that a committee be appointed to investigate the construction of a War Memorial. Messrs Penner, Hobbs, and Mathieson were appointed. In January 1946, a motion was passed to hold a public meeting in the Town Hall February 2, at 2:30 P.M. and all local organizations, Ladies Aids, School Boards etc., were advised. Due to poor attendance at this meeting and another called in April the matter was tabled. Yet at each meeting the form of the Memorial was discussed. A Town Hall, Public Library and Rest Room, Park, Swimming Pool, Skating Rink and Cenotaph were all suggested. In September 1946 a motion by Wolch-Franko set the annual banquet as the date for further discussion. With outside members at that banquet January 1947, the people of Watson and District voted that the Board of Trade erect a War Memorial. Some lost heart and in December 1947 the Board



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of Trade voted \$200.00 toward the construction of the Legion Cenotaph. At that same meeting a motion by Mr. Penner seconded by Mr. Franko that the Board of Trade set up a fund to finance the building of a War Memorial, Skating and Curling Rink was passed. From that time on every effort was made to raise funds for the project. A frigidaire, a truck, a car were raffled. Farmers donated grain from registered seed. A canvas was made of the town. The Community Club made donations, and the money piled up. On November 17, 1949, the site of the Tennis Courts was selected and presented by the town. In April 1950 as receipts approached \$10,000.00 a building committee of Messrs. Hausacker, Ceasar, M. Smith, A. Preston and Jones was appointed with authority to proceed with purchase of materials and construction. Mr. G. Ceasar was put in charge of construction, with some hired labour and volunteer labour. The curling rink was built and the foundation of the skating rink poured, and half the rafters completed before bad weather brought operations to a halt. The Curling Club then bought shingles to shingle the curling rink and installed the wiring. The Curling Club had a very successful winter session. Fifty members curling each evening and several bonspiels being put on. So the men and women are learning to curl together without quarrelling and next winter we hope to start our children on the same path in the Memorial Skating Rink.

Sentry: "Halt, who goes there?"

Voice: "You wouldn't recognize me anyway. I'm new here."

A man who'd just joined for training passed a captain without saluting. The captain stopped him.

"Take a look at me," he said. "Do you attach any special significance to this uniform?"

The new chum looked him over, then grinned. "Why, you lucky dog," he exclaimed, "you've got a suit that fits!"

**MEN OF THE WATSON DISTRICT WHO SERVED THEIR COUNTRY IN
WORLD WAR I 1914-1918**

James Crosland	John McNab
Peter McNab	Alvah Bobb
James Warrian, Sr.	Robert Lampard, Deceased.
Ernest Bernard	Walton Sproule
George Crosland	Thomas White

**THOSE OF THE WATSON DISTRICT WHO SERVED THEIR COUNTRY IN
WORLD WAR II 1939-1945**

Abbot, Sgt. Jackie	Frederick, Pte. Dan D.
Ashford, FO, W. E.	Frederick, Pte. Glenn G.
Bailey, Cpl. Jack	Fritsch, PO R. T.
Bettin, Pte. A. A.	Fuerstenberg, LAC Bernard A.
Bettin, Cpl. A. F.	Fuerstenberg, Pte. Parricia M.
Bettin, W02 Bernard E.	Gormican, Sgt. Orville T.
† Bettin, Sgt. Wendelin B.	Gormican, Spr. Vernon E.
† Brager, PO Kenneth L.	Gourley, FO Daryl M., D.F.C.
Braget, Tpr. Gilbert R.	Graham, Sto 2 Roy W.
Byers, Cpl. Christine H.	Guber, Cfn. Rudolph
Cameron, Sgt. George T.	† Haecke, FP A.P.
Campbell, Pte. D. S.	Hagen, Cpl. H.O.
Carr, Lieut. Yolanda	Hannah, Pte. W. J.
Carroll, LAC Dennis T.	Hansen, LAW Martha
Ceaser, Cpl. John S.	Henderson, Sgm. A. R.
Chomakewich, Pte. Nick	Hermanson, FO Evert
Christie, Pte. Malcolm L.	Hermanson, FO Jack.
Coghill, Pte. Albert	Hill, Sub-Lt. Alex M.
Collier Flt. Officer E.A.	Hill Col. Arthur J.
Corey, Cpl. L. J.	Hinderks, FO Bernard H.
Dereniuk, FO Harry	Hinderks, LAC Donald
(Prisoner of War)	Hyslop, Pte. Jean M.
Delegaty F. Sgt. G. C.	Hyslop, Wren Margaret J.
Detwiller, Spr. Gordon H.	Hyslop, Cpl. Orville V.
Doell, Tpr. W. W.	Hysop, Cpl. George H.
Doell,, LAC Herman A.	Ketchen, Sgt. I. C.
Ebbing, L. Cpl. Clemence	Ketchen, OD M. A.
Foster, J. S.	Ketchen, Sgt. T. H.
Foster Cpl. Gerald H.	Kidd, Pte. Leslie C.
Foster, Pte. O. N.	Knackstedt, Fex Sgt. August
Franko, LAC John	Knafelc, LAC Stanley
Franko, Tpr. W.G. A.	Knopp, Col. Annie

- Knopp, Cpl. Elgin
 Knopp, Cpl. Elsie
 Knopp, Bdr. Fred W.
 Knopp, Cpl. Helen
 Knopp, Tpr. Herbert
 Koenig, Petty Officer H. J.
 Lee, Pte. Hugh Keith
 † Lokinger, L. Cpl. Fred W.
 Lockinger, L. Cpl. John L.
 Luginsky, Capt. S. M.
 McDonald, Sub-Lt. James
 McIntyre, Cpl. G. E.
 McLeod, Pte. Brice
 McNab, AB Allan M.
 McNab, Maxwell D., R.C.A.F.
 Mackey, Sgm. T. R.
 Masluke, Pte. George
 Maynard, Cpl. A. R.
 Meyers, FO D.N.
 Millar, Gnr. James H.
 Millar, LAC Robert M.
 Morton, PO Fred
 Musgrave, CFn Cecil T.
 Nabseth, Spr. Elvin
 Neish, Rfmn, W. J.
 † Oliver, PO W.R.
 Olson, Cpl. Christian
 † Partridge, PO H.A.
 † Polowich, Sgt. Michael L.
 Prosko, LAC Peter P.
 Prosko, LAC Emil J.
 Putnam, AC2 Joseph
 Putnam, Lieut, Lloyd G.
 † Putnam, Sgt. Max E.
 Pylatuke, Pte. Ernest L.
 Rea, LAC Clarence F.
 Robinson, Pte. Donald
 Robinson, Pte. Harold T.
 Sampson, Sgt. Hubin G.
 Schwartz, Pte. Arthur
 Schwartz, Pte. Lawrence
 Schwartz, Rfn. R. S.
 Smart, Sgt. H. W.
 Smith, EA4 Bernard C.
 Sommer, Pte. Charles M.
 Sproule, AC2 Bary H.
 Sproule, Lloyd H., Sgt.
 Sproule, OS Ronald P.
 Sproule, William R., R.C.A.F.
 Stanley, Pte. E.W.
 Steinke, LAC J.J.
 Steinke, LAC ROMAN J.
 Stewart, Pte. James S.
 † Stewart, Rfm, Roger A.
 Strelic, Tpr. J.F.
 Strelic, Gnr. M.
 † Strome, Gnr. F.G.
 Sullivan, LAC Howard
 † Tindall, FO C.A.
 Tuningley, Cpl. Albert
 Tuningley, Pte. James
 Tuningley, Gnr. J. H.
 Tuningley, Rfmn. John
 Tuningley, Cpl. V.M.
 Vossen, L. Cpl. Arnold H.
 Weisgerber, Pte. Constantine D.
 Whetter, Cpl. E.
 † Whetter, Staff, Sgt., M. F.
 White, FO A. Edward
 White, Pte. A.F.
 Wickenhauser, Stoker Herb J.
 Wickenhauser, PO L.F.
 Widdifield, O. Tel. Leslie R.
 Wilkes, Sgt. Martin H.
 Wolch, LAC Harold
 Wolch, Pte. Marvin
 Yurkowski, Pte. Wm.
 Zentner, LAC Anton
 Zentner, Cpl. Henry
 Zentner, Pte. J.J.

† Gave their lives while serving their Country.



THINGS THAT HAPPENED, OR DID THEY?

In the early years when threshing outfits were few, the threshing work sometimes continued till near Christmas time and the weather often became intensely cold. It was necessary at these times to fire the steam boilers all night in order to keep the pipes from freezing.

The fellow who did the job as firing had a cold vigil.

The occasion we tell about, the young man who acted as fireman put on another suit of underwear each time the thermometer took a dip. Finally when season's work was wound up and the threshing machine pulled in for the season, our hero decided it was time to change clothes. He peeled off the underwear, suit by suit and when he reached bed rock there were seven suits of heavy underwear on the bunk house floor. Compare this with the abbreviated affairs some men use for underwear today, and is it any wonder, we read of people freezing to death?



During the early years the farmers delivered most of their grain to the elevators with teams and sleighs during the winter months. In the years of heavy snow fall the sleigh trails built up by the drifting snow sometimes became three or four feet high and if a horse stepped out of the track he became almost buried. At these times it was impossible for sleighs to pass without upsetting, especially was this true with loads. The driver usually kept a sharp lookout ahead and when an approaching team was seen the fellow who had the first opportunity at a cross road or farmer's gate pulled out and waited till the other rig passed.

This time there was a load of grain and a load of wood. The driver with the grain should have stopped at the corner but failed to do so, the two teams approached each other and came to a stop within a few feet of one another. They had to stop, otherwise they would have turned over. Both drivers took off their coats and marched around ahead of the horses and proceeded to tell each other in no uncertain terms what they thought of one another. They didn't fight. What was the use, there were no spectators. After awhile when each man had vowed he would stand right there all night and longer if necessary, they took their shovels and cleared out a road that let the man with the grain drive around.



The Watson Doctor was called to a place in the country. They said the hired girl was ill. The doctor made the usual preliminary examinations. Pulse was normal, temperature O. K., cheeks rosy and eyes bright. Says the

Doctor, "why girlie you are not sick, why are you acting this way." Replied the girl, "I know I am not sick but I have been with these people two years and they have not paid me and I intend to stay in bed till I get my money,"

Says the doctor, "Move over a little, they have owed me for five Years."

It was on a summer's evening and one of our local young gallants was sitting with his best girl in a car parked not far from the Watson Union Hospital. It was agreed that each time they saw a star fall he might have



Young folks go for a ride.

Left to Right: John Kiefer; Lillie Kiefer; Clara Kiefer; John Hinderks.

a kiss. In a little while the kisses were coming thick and fast. Imagine their surprise when it was found they were counting the sparks coming from a C.N.R. locomotive stopped at the water tank.

During the early years church services were often held in the school house. There services also provided a meeting place for the community and were attended by old and young. The young people sometimes

going in groups and couples.

On one occasion — a young man took his horse and buggy picked up his girl friend and proceeded toward the school. Presently in the trail ahead they saw an animal with a bushy tail, and two white stripes down its back. It was too late to drive around and the buggy ran over the beast and it proceeded to defend itself with the means nature had provided. The young couple realized the horse and buggy had been sprayed but believed that they themselves had escaped. On arrival at the school they unhitched their horse and in order to make sure left their outer coats in the buggy. They entered the school house and the aroma permeated the room, heads turned their way, one man got up and opened the windows, once or twice the minister appeared ready to conclude the service and call it a day, however, he bravely struggled on, while the boy and girl sat in blissful ignorance that they were the cause of any annoyance. It was a long time before they heard the last of this little incident.

It was during the tough winter of 1906-1907 and the train hadn't got through to Watson for two or three days. Several travelling men were marooned at the Watson Hotel awaiting a train. There was no word or indication that a train was likely to come that night so they had bedded down their rooms for another nights sleep. Harry Muldoon was an expert at imitating the sounds made by wild animals, birds, steam boats, etc. About eleven o'clock Harry opened the front door of the Hotel and made a noise exactly like a steam locomotive pulling in from the water tank. The travellers came tumbling down the stairs in various stages of dress and undress and of course there was no train. What they said or did to Harry is not reported but our guess is nothing.

An early homesteader had worked oxen for several years, and had at last managed to purchase a team of horses. They were not a fancy team, but were at least an improvement. Our friend hired out on a local threshing crew when the season's work started. The horses hadn't any grain all summer and now that they could feed out of the farmers oat bin when they were threshing the man decided it was time to fatten up his new team. When the crew unhitched for noon he filled a bag with oats and poured the contents out to the horses. Reasoning that the more oats he fed his team the sooner they would be in good condition. While the rest of the gang were washing for dinner our friend again filled his bag with grain and gave it to his team. The next day he had two dead horses. The loss of the horses was a severe blow, but was a small part of the suffering he endured from the ribbing he received from other members of the crew.

This story illustrates the resourcefulness of the early settlers and how they were able to make use of the facilities at hand to meet an emergency. A family was coming to the Watson district by wagon by way of Rosthern, and it being summer, camped along the trail at nights. They stopped near a settler's home one evening and desiring some fresh milk for supper, they took his pail and approached the farm yard about milking time. The lady of the house said certainly he might have some milk and did he want it strained. The man replied in the affirmative. Then, set down your pail. She then spread her skirt over the top of the pail and proceeded to strain the milk through her petticoat.

THE SACRED HEART CHURCH OF WATSON

Before Our Lord ascended into heaven He said to his apostles: "Go ye into the whole world and teach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16, 15). These words were not only addressed to the apostles but also to the successors of the Apostles, the bishops and priests of the Church. In compliance with this demand of Our Lord the Benedictine Fathers of Cluny Priory Wetaug, Illinois, U. S. A. (in the spring of the year 1903) transferred their monastery to the heart of Saskatchewan, Canada, and with the help of Confreres of St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minnesota, founded St. Peter's Colony, comprising 50 townships which at that time belonged to the Vicariate Apostolic of Prince Albert. These townships are 35 and 36 in ranges 18 to 22 inclusive, townships 27, 38, 39 and 40 in ranges 18 to 26 inclusive, and township 41 in ranges 23 to 26 inclusive, all west of the second meridian, a total of 1800 square miles. In the eastern part of this district is situated the parish and town of Watson, the subject of this article.

At the head of the small Benedictine community that founded St. Peter's Colony was Prior Alfred Mayer, O.S.B., who with apostolic zeal and great pastoral experience selected the various places for the establishment of parishes and missions in the above mentioned district of 1800 square miles. He it was who, on the 16th of August 1903, celebrated the first Holy Mass in the house of Peter Heilmann on the southeast quarter of section 18, township 37, range 18, about five miles from the present location of Watson. Two weeks before he had sent to the eastern part of this district Father Peter Windschiegl, O. S. B., accompanied by F. J. Lange, who played a significant role in bringing settlers into the colony. It was Father Peter who on August 2nd, 1903, had the first divine services in the tent

of Frank Kintzon on the northwest quarter of section 20, township 36, range 19, which now is within the parish of Englefeld. On his second visit to the district, when Father Peter said Holy Mass on August 30th, 1903, he was instructed by Prior Alfred to dedicate the mission in the future parish of Englefeld to the Holy Guardian Angels. On this occasion he said Mass in the log-house of Thomas Graf. In fact, the whole territory in townships 35, 36, 37 and 38 in ranges 18 and 19 — a territory 24 miles long and 12 miles wide — was entrusted to Father Peter, who held divine services in various homes, since the sites for the church had not yet been chosen, and the proper selection of the sites required great circumspection, especially so since the C.N. Railway was not yet constructed, and townsites of Watson and Englefeld had not been definitely determined. On October 3rd, 1903, Father Peter baptized Louis Frank Auchstaetter, the newly born child of Jacob Auchstaetter. The baptism was conferred on Mr. Auchstaetter's homestead, on section 30, Township 35, range 18. On May 18, 1904, he conferred baptism in the house of Anton Bartsch on Mr. Bartsch's daughter, who is now an Ursuline nun at Bruno. Father Matthias O.S.B., who from July 3rd to October 8, 1904, attended this extensive missionary field, blessed the marriage of John Sommer and Mary Langheim, on August 15, 1904. Father Peter was then again placed in charge of this territory until Prior Alfred appointed Father Benedict Steigenberger, O.S.B., as his successor. Father Benedict (still living) on February 3rd, 1905, took up his residence in a small log-cabin on Jacob Spring's farm. Spring's house, a separate build-



The first Catholic Church built in Watson — 1905. Rev. Fr. Benedict as Parish Priest.

ing close by, with two comparatively large rooms, served on Sundays as a place of worship for the settlers of the district. It was in this house, on Christmasday, December 25, 1904 that Father Peter celebrated the first High Mass within the future parish of Watson.

Two days after the arrival of Father Benedict, at a meeting of the Catholic settlers, the following trustees were elected for the future parish of Watson: Joseph Ackermann, Peter Bartsch, Adam Fuerstenberg, John Sommer and John Wilkes. At a meeting on February 19th, 1906, at which Prior Alfred presided, it was decided that the district be divided into two parishes, the one for Watson to be called the Sacred Heart Parish, and the other the Englefeld parish. It was further decided that a church was to be erected as soon as possible close to the rising town of Watson. For the congregation of the Holy Guardian Angels' Parish the following trustees were elected: Henry Nordick, John Pitka, and John Bettin. Under Father Benedict's direction a log-church, 20 x 30, was built south of the railway on the land of Joseph Nordick and completed by the middle of July 1906. At Watson some trouble was encountered in finding the proper site for the church, but the difficulty was overcome, and by October 29th, 1905, the first services were held in the new frame church, 30 x 22, to which two small rooms for the pastor's dwelling were annexed on the west side. Much credit is due Father Benedict, who organized both congregations, at Watson and Englefeld, and under whose pastoral care the first churches — though only temporary buildings — were erected in both places. South of Watson a new congregation, St. Oswald's Mission, was formed in the year 1906, and Father Peter said the first Holy Mass in that locality, in the house of Math. Bartholet, on October 19, 1906.

For twenty two months Father Benedict attended the new congregations at Watson and Englefeld, until he was succeeded by Father Meinrad Seiferman, O.S.B., at the beginning of the year 1907. Father Meinrad, a very energetic man, the same year built the present parish house at Watson at a cost of \$2000, enlarged the church, and added a tower to it. After his departure in September 1908 — towards the close of that year Father Meinrad went back to his Abbey in Minnesota and is still living — Father Benedict again took charge of Watson and Englefeld until April 1909, when Father Bernard Schaeffler, O.S.B., was appointed by Prior Bruno Doeffer, O.S.B., pastor of the two places and was also given charge of St. Oswald's Mission. Bishop Albert Pascal, O.M.L., visited the Sacred Heart Parish in 1910 and solemnly blessed the church on June 3rd, conferring at the same time the sacrament of Confirmation on 25 members of the parish. Again the good bishop visited the parish in 1911, when he celebrated a Pontifical

High Mass in the church and blessed the three bells which were donated to the parish by the Christian mothers. On October 1st, 1911, Father Joseph Wickel, O.S.B., who a few days before had been ordained a priest, celebrated his first solemn High Mass at Watson and was at the same time appointed Father Bernard's assistant. Both attended not only the parish at Watson and Englefeld, but also St. Oswald's Mission, St. Gregor, St. Anselm's Mission at Spalding, Jansen, and even for a time Carmel. In the year 1912, under Father Bernard's supervision, the present frame-church at Englefeld, north of the town, was erected, and Father Joseph was appointed resident pastor of the Holy Guardian Angels' Church. Watson's separate school also was erected during the nine years of Father Bernard's pastorate.

Towards the beginning of June, 1918, Father Dominic Hofmann, O.S.B., became pastor of the Sacred Heart Church, and when he was transferred to the parish of Humboldt by Abbot Michael Ott, O.S.B., in July 1920, Father Fridolin Tembreuil, O. S. B., took charge of the parish at Watson. Seeing that the frame-church built by Father Benedict and enlarged by Father Meinrad proved much too small for the growing congregation at Watson, Father Dominic had made preparation to erect a new and more substantial one, but it was Father Fridolin under whose direction the present basement-church, 100 x 41, was built and solemnly blessed by Abbot Michael on October 23rd, 1921. The cost of the new building was in the vicinity of \$8000. On the same day, October 23rd, Abbot Michael announced to the parish that Father Marcellus Mayer, O.S.B., had been appointed pastor of the Sacred Heart Church. During his pastorate the present beautiful Catholic separate school was erected and the Ursuline Sisters of Bruno, who erected a teacherate close by, were given the charge of the school.

In October, 1923, Father Marcellus was appointed pastor of Englefeld, and Father Theodore Doepker, O.S.B., took charge of the Sacred Heart Parish of Watson and the Mission of St. Oswald, which with a firm and gentle hand he guided until the fall of 1948 — a little over twenty-five years — when he was appointed pastor of Carmel parish and the mission of the Immaculate Conception. His successor since September 6, 1948 is Father George Brodner, O.S.B., who has also charge of the missions of St. Oswald at Romance and Holy Rosary at Leroy.

It is now close to fifty years since the "glad tidings" of the gospel have been announced to the people in and around Watson and Englefeld and Leroy and Romance. Let them now judge for themselves if Our Lord's demand has been fulfilled: "Go ye into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature".

THE AGRICULTURAL STORY

A Brief History of Agricultural Development of the Watson District 1910 to 1950

The settlers who arrived on the Quill Plains during the first ten years of the century might well be termed the real pioneers of the district. These years were mostly taken up performing the duties that went with homesteading. Farm buildings had to be constructed; many of the homesteaders' buildings were of log construction obtained in the district. A required acreage was broken and other duties carried out before title to the land could be obtained. By 1910 the early homesteaders had proved up their claims. Not much desirable homestead land remained available in the district.

Many of the homesteaders were now ready to sell their quarter section and move on to other pastures. Some never intended to continue on the



First Board of Trade, Watson, 1907.

Back Row: Left to Right — Jim White, F. J. Vossen, Jr., Jake Spring, Mr. White, Sr., Joe Vossen, Nick Wilhelm, Louis Stritzel. Front Row — Joe Mercer, Jack Gordon, Tom Robinson, Joe Hufnagel, John Betten.

land. Others were misfits as farmers and glad to quit.

Big land companies in the U.S.A. were now running land seekers excursions into Western Canada and much land was purchased by people coming in on these excursions. Many homesteaders listed their land for sale with the land companies and the companies also acquired for sale large acreage of non homestead land. Some purchased land purely for speculation; others shipped in their live stock and farm equipment and set about establishing homes.

The homesteaders who remained, in some instances, acquired more land, increased their acres under cultivation and undertook to add improvements to their farms.

Agriculture in the Watson district now entered *the second phase of its development*. Oxen supplied the power on many of the farms. Sometimes an ox hitched single was used on the road, and a horse and ox hitched as a team was not an unusual sight. During the years 1911 and 1912 more teams of oxen than of horses were tied to the hitch racks in Watson on Saturday afternoons, when the farmers came to town for their mail and supplies. A few good stallions had been brought into the district. Horses, in car loads, were shipped in from the east. The farmers made every effort to replace their oxen with horses.

The homesteader worked oxen not because he liked to but because conditions demanded that he did so. Oxen were slow and often exasperating to handle. However, they were powerful beasts and would accomplish a fair amount of work on prairie hay and grass as feed. A good team of horses those days often sold for five hundred or even six hundred dollars. As horses became available, oxen rapidly disappeared from the scene and by 1915 only the occasional yoke of work cattle remained in the district.

The varieties of grain available at this period were late in maturing and were often caught by early frosts, consequently low grades and reduced yields, with disappointing returns only too prevalent.

About 1912 *Marquis wheat was developed*. This new wheat matured, under prairie conditions, considerably earlier than the Red Fife and other varieties previously grown. Marquis wheat also yielded well and excelled in milling qualities. By 1914 seed of this new variety of wheat was available in the Watson district and most of the farmers hastened to secure this new variety to seed their land.

1915 proved to be a good year for the grain grower. Yields were high and the harvesting season was favourable throughout the province. In fact the year 1915 was remembered a long time as the year of the big crop.

The Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Company was organized early

in this decade. The farmers felt there were many injustices in the marketing of their grain. The large spreads between grades and between street prices and car lot prices were matters the farmer felt were not justified. The Co-op Elevator Company was producer-owned and controlled. The farmer subscribed for one or more \$50.00 shares. 15% was paid in cash and the Saskatchewan Government advanced the other 85% which was repaid out of the elevator earnings. A local Co-op elevator was constructed at Watson in 1914. The Co-op Elevator Company prospered from the beginning and made money for its shareholders.

With the advent of World War I the prices of all farm products advanced and there was a general effort to get more land under cultivation. Some steam breaking outfits operated. However, horse power was largely used for breaking and general farm operators. The internal combustion engine tractor had appeared. These were huge complicated slow moving machines. They were high in purchase price and expensive to operate. Large steam threshing outfits were the order of the day. Several operated in the Watson district and some seasons threshing continued until near Christmas time.

1918 was a disastrous year for the Watson district. The season was dry, nevertheless an average crop had headed out and reached the bloom stage when on July 22nd and 23rd severe frosts swept across the province and thousands of acres in the Watson district were never threshed. Rains immediately followed and a heavy second growth provided an abundance of feed for the live stock. This unfortunate season was a severe blow to the district because prices were now good and most farmers found it necessary to find seed grain outside the district at high prices.

1919 was a favourable season, good yields, and satisfactory prices. The Dominion Government of that day set up a Wheat Board to handle the entire 1919 wheat crop.

The idea back of this was to prevent wheat prices soaring to exorbitant levels due to the after-war inflation.

During the early years taxes on farm lands were very low. A flat municipal tax of \$10.00 per quarter section plus \$1.60 revenue tax was the usual rate before school districts were formed. The farmer was often permitted to work out the most of his land tax on the municipal roads.

The Watson district was settled by people from many parts of the world. There were settlers from the British Isles, from Central Europe, the Scandinavian countries and from Russia; also from Eastern Canada and the United States. Here was a task for the melting pot. Would it do the job? We shall take another look later on.

The early settlers recognized the need for educational facilities. School districts were formed as rapidly as the need demanded. Debentures for \$1000.00 to \$1200.00 would construct and furnish a one room country school during the early years and often build a stable in the bargain.

As demands for more community services increased, taxes gradually increased also.

During the year 1915 the first rural telephone system was installed in the Watson district. This did much to remove the isolation that sometimes surrounded the lives of the early settlers.

During the latter half of this decade, farmers of the district commenced to acquire automobiles and more attention was being given to road construction and maintainance. If the land was open prairie, a road grader with twelve horses could grade a mile of road in three days and make a fair job. In the bush country where sloughs and pot holes prevailed, road construction was a slow laborous process.

1912 and 1913 were the wettest seasons experienced on the Quill Plains. Sometimes water ran down the furrow following the breaking plow. Many fields were so wet during the harvest season of 1912 that the binders could not operate. Much grain remained in the fields and was never harvested. The Big Quill Lake spread out and threatened to consume much farm land around its borders. The wild ducks and geese almost took possession of the country during these wet seasons. The ducks settled in millions on the grain fields. It was said that on one farm the ducks destroyed seven thousand bushels of oats in three days and nights.

1920 — 1930

The ten year period 1920 to 1930 witnessed the phenomenal rise and near collapse of the *Saskatchewan Wheat Producers Limited*, commonly known as the Wheat Pool.

The Government Wheat Board had functioned very much to the satisfaction of the farmer, as he had received a handsome final payment. However the Wheat Board had been disbanded and the Government of the day declined to re-establish it.

The after war boom collapsed and the prices of farm products declined severely. The farmers felt some other system of marketing their grain should be found. The Farmers Union, an aggressive farmers organization, at this time brought Aaron Sapiro from the United States for a series of meetings. Mr. Sapiro advocated a Contract Pool to operate when at least 51% of the seeded acreage in the Province was signed up. Thousands of

farmers flocked to hear this great crusader outline his plea for a wheat pool. The organized farmers of the province determined to attempt the sign-up. Many farmers left their work and joined in the drive to put the Pool across. In the summer of 1924 the required acreage was obtained, the Pool was organized and officers elected. They were now ready to take delivery of the 1924 crop. All country elevators handled Pool grain under the contract. The Wheat Pool made an initial payment when the grain was delivered and a final payment when the season's crop was disposed of.

The farmers proved loyal to their organization. The directors opened selling agencies in many of the European countries and sold the grain direct. The new organization flourished and many of its members believed that at long last the farmers problem of marketing his grain was solved. The Wheat Pool set about to acquire elevator facilities of its own. Country elevators were constructed as rapidly as possible. During the first two or three years the Wheat Pool built and acquired more than four hundred country elevators and terminal facilities to match.

There were now two farmer owned elevator companies in the province competing against one another and many farmers had interests in both companies. A share holders meeting of the Co-op Elevator Company was called in Regina. Feeling ran high for several days, when the delegates finally voted to sell the entire facilities of the Co-op Elevator Company to the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. The Pool now owned some 850 country elevators and large terminal accommodations. It was now the largest producer owned grain handling system in the world.

The Pool continued to grow and prosper. The 1929 crop was harvested and a big percentage delivered to the elevator. The Pool had made an initial payment of one dollar per bushel basis No. 1 Northern for the wheat delivered. Late in October there were rumblings of severe declines in the stock markets in New York and Eastern Canada. This soon reflected on the prices of farm products and wheat prices collapsed. The price of wheat was soon below the initial payment the Pools had advanced to the farmers and continued to decline to sickening levels. When the Pool finally came out of this tail spin it found it had overpaid the farmers on grain already delivered to the tune of Fourteen Million dollars. (\$14,000,000). The Saskatchewan Government of that day stepped into the picture and guaranteed to the banks every dollar the Wheat Pool owed. The Pool Elevator system was now mortgaged to the hilt and the farmers who had acquired a handsome equity in their system now found their deduction certificates worth only a few cents on the dollar.

The Right Honourable R. B. Bennett, Prime Minister of Canada at

that time, was sympathetic to the Wheat Pools. However, Mr. Bennett felt that in view of the position the Pool now found itself, that a General Manager well versed in the grain business, should be appointed to handle the selling end of the business.

J. I. McFarland of Alberta was selected for this job. With the now depressed prices it was no longer possible for the farmer to carry on with an initial payment on his wheat. The Pool directors released the farmers from their contracts.

Mr. McFarland withdrew the selling agencies that had been set up in foreign countries and used the established facilities of the grain trade in disposing of Pool grain.

The Pool officials set about to repay the fourteen million dollar debt to the banks over a period of twenty years. To conclude the story of the Wheat Pool we can say that at the end of eighteen years every dollar was repaid and, with over eleven hundred elevators in Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Pool Elevator Company remains the largest grain handling concern in the world. The members equity in the elevator deductions and commercial reserve is worth one hundred cents on the dollar.

1924 was a dry season and on August 1st of that year a severe hail storm swept over a part of the Watson district and brought ruin to the crops in its path.

The years 1925 and 1926 were favourable, with good crops and satisfactory prices.

The year 1927 was a rainy season. A late heavy crop was in the making. For the first time in this district, a serious scourge of black stem rust hit the grain at a critical stage and thousands of acres of both wheat and oats failed to pay the harvesting expenses.

The season 1928 brought a heavy promising crop. However, a late August freeze caught much of it before maturity and lowered grades resulted.

During this period noxious weeds were becoming more and more of a menace. Wild oats were infesting many farms. The sow thistle had become established in the district. With its running root stalk and the seed readily carried by the wind some believed the farmer would be driven from the land by noxious weeds. Improved summer fallow methods and the development of modern tillage machinery have brought the Sow Thistle and Canadian Thistle under control and they no longer take a heavy toll in the district.

Farming methods changed but little during this ten year period. Horses continued to be used mostly for farm work and delivering the grain

to the elevators. Farm gasoline tractors had been improved and acquired by some farmers. On the whole they were not popular for tillage work on the land. The big steam thresher faded from the scene during this period. The breaking up of the prairie and road construction hastened the drainage and the creeks could no longer be depended on to furnish water for the steam boilers.

The gasoline tractor of this time would operate a medium sized threshing separator. These outfits could operate with a crew of seven or eight men, so the large outfits requiring fifteen or sixteen men were no longer popular; especially was this true with the farm women, whose job it usually was to provide the meals for these huge crews.

During the late years of this decade the machine companies introduced the combine harvester in the Watson district. These early machines were cumbersome and failed to appeal to most of the farmers, and for many years most of the grain was harvested the old way with binder and threshing machine.

The log buildings of homestead days were now disappearing and were largely replaced by frame buildings.

The Canadian Pacific Railroad had built their branch line from Lanigan to Melfort. Villages and hamlets sprang up on this line and grain elevators were constructed. The long haul of grain from the north and southwest to Watson were no longer necessary.

While agriculture in the Watson district was largely devoted to grain growing, it was from the first, recognized as a mixed farming district. Most farmers raised cattle and hogs and shipments of live stock were made weekly to Winnipeg and other markets.

Many splendid flocks of poultry are raised and play an important part in the farm economy of the community.

Most farmers had splendid gardens and, while during the early years it was generally believed only early vegetables would succeed, many people soon found that with proper care they could produce table corn, tomatoes, and vine fruits in abundance. Many people have undertaken growing berries, plums and apples, sometimes with splendid success.

1930 to 1940

This decade was ushered in by the great depression; sometimes referred to as the hungry thirties. The farmers of the Watson district suffered during this time along with farmers elsewhere. The depression lasted for ten long years. Perhaps conditions were improving however, with the

vent of World War II; economic conditions changed rapidly and prices for farm products increased materially.

During the early thirties grain prices sank almost to the vanishing point. Wheat 30 cents, oats 6 or 7 cents, barley at one time was worth only 2 or 3 cents at the elevator. Market hogs brought only 2 or 3 dollars per head and it was not uncommon to hear of a farmer shipping cattle and instead of receiving the cheque he expected he received a bill asking for money to finish paying the freight. At the beginning of the thirties many farms were mortgaged and some farmers were indebted to the banks and implement companies. These concerns now became collecting agencies and all creditors wanted their money. The situation was hopeless. Many farmers were unable to support their families and pay their taxes, let alone meet old obligations; however, we can say here that while whole districts were reported to have been on relief in many parts of the province, very few families required Government assistance in the Watson district. The schools remained open and the municipalities solvent.

Black stem rust was becoming more prevalent year by year and heavy tolls were taken by this menace during the thirties. Marquis wheat with all its splendid qualities was very susceptible to rust. Scientists were working on rust resistant wheats and about 1936 brought out Thatcher wheat which had all the good yielding and milling qualities and was quite resistant to stem rust. This variety was followed closely by the varieties Apex and Renown. Many farmers were reluctant to stop the growing of Marquis wheat, however 1938 was a severe rust year and thousands of acres of Marquis wheat were not worth the harvesting expenses. The farmers now turned almost entirely to the new rust proof varieties. Science had conquered another hazard and wheat growing entered a new era in our district.

Cultural methods changed but little during this period. Farm tractors were becoming more practical, but the machine companies were slow in developing tillage machinery to operate satisfactorily by tractor power. Perhaps this was largely due to the economic conditions of the day. Horses continued to do the work on most of the farms.

During all the early years, when in the winter the farmers and their families desired to go to town, or attend some social affair or even visit their neighbours, the custom had been to bed down the sleigh box with straw or hay and pack the family in with blankets and robes, hitch a team to the sleigh and face the elements. Early in this period someone had a brain wave and built himself an enclosed van mounted on sleighs, and heated by a sheet iron stove "sometimes home made". It was found with an outfit so rigged the family could ride for many miles, even during the severest

weather in warmth and comfort. It was difficult to understand why this idea had not been thought of long before. Nearly every farmer soon acquired an enclosed conveyance for winter driving. These rigs were of many sizes and designs. They all answered the purpose to a greater or lesser extent, and still find a place during the winters when heavy snowfall blocks the roads, preventing the use of motor cars.

1940 — 1950

The era 1940 to 1950 witnessed more changes in agricultural methods than any period since the Watson district was settled. Farm tractors appeared on rubber tires, they were simple to operate and were equipped with several speeds to meet various requirements. The implement companies brought out new tillage and seeding implements often mounted on rubber, designed to operate at higher speeds than the old horse-drawn machinery. The shortage of farm help during the war years and the strong demands for everything the farms produced, all tended to hasten farm mechanization. The combine harvester and thresher had been improved over the years and was being used more and more and the old fashioned threshing machine used less and less. As this is written (1950) it is safe to say that more than 90% of the grain in the Watson district is now handled by combine harvesters. Most of the grain is delivered to the elevators by motor trucks. The elevator companies have been quick to modernize their plants to meet the new conditions; and the cold winter hauls with teams and sleds are things of the past. As prices for farm products improved, the farmers set about to square up the old debts. Farm mortgages were lifted; old debts to the banks and machine companies were liquidated. Most farmers acquired modern mechanized equipment. Land values increased during this period and good prices for grain stimulated the clearing and breaking of much bush land that the farmer had previously hesitated to tackle. Powerful caterpillar Bull Dozers, equipped with brush cutters make short work of clearing land. These machines will clear in one day and pile the brush, what in former times required years of back-breaking toil for a man with axe and grub hoe.

As mentioned earlier in this article, the farmers learned how to control the Canada and Sow Thistle. However, the weeds belonging to the Mustard family grew steadily worse. Especially during dry years these weeds took an enormous toll; it seemed the best farmers suffered equally with the mediocre by these weeds. Seeds will lie in ground for years and when conditions are right take possession of the land often choking out the growing grain. Again science came to the rescue. Chemicals were developed and spray machines manufactured to apply the material. This, when used at the proper time according to directions, will completely destroy French

weed and all weeds belonging to the Mustard families, as well as other broad leaved plants. These chemicals, if properly handled, leave the grain unharmed and the moisture formerly sapped by the weeds is available for the growing crops.

The farmers of the Watson district have been quick to avail themselves of this new method of weed eradication and fields yellow with mustard are now seldom seen in the district.

We have tried to show that many of the hazards that plagued the early settlers have been overcome. Grain growing in the Watson district is perhaps surrounded with no more problems than confront the farmers anywhere else. The district is prosperous; land values are on a sound, substantial basis.

CONCLUSION

In this story we have tried to deal only with matters directly affecting agriculture in the Watson district from 1910 down through forty years of time. Much has been omitted. We have refrained from mentioning names of individuals. To do so would mean that some would be left out. We can safely say that all the settlers who chose to establish their homes and raise their families in the community have all made their contribution to the progress and development of their district. The melting pot has done its work; no longer are neighbourhoods recognized by the name of the country the original settlers came from. The children of all have been educated in our schools and some have gone out and distinguished themselves in their chosen fields of endeavour. The sons and daughters of the different early groups have intermarried and are the well established citizens of the district today. Looking back we can say that the early settlers from different lands contributed something of their native culture, something of their way of life and our district is richer for their contribution.

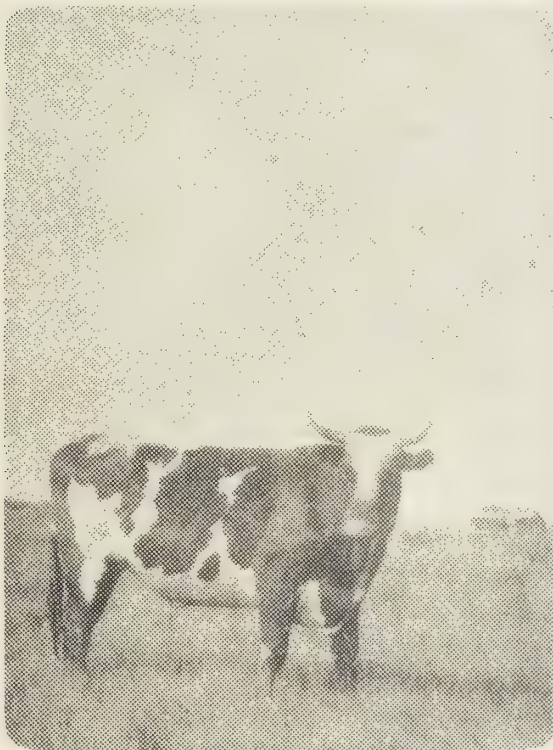
The town of Watson is the center of this rich agricultural district. Two standard gravelled highways cross at this point. Both the C.N.R. and C.P. Railways serve the district. The town has several merchandising stores equal to those of any other district. First class garages and implement shops meet the agricultural requirements of the district. Four churches supply the spiritual needs of the community. A first class union hospital serves the health need of all the people. Complete telephone services cover the rural areas. Rural electrification is rapidly supplying the rural people with light and power. The young farmers of 1950, often the sons and daughters of the pioneers, possess a knowledge of the land that their parents acquired in the slow hard way. The forty years we write about have been forty years

of progress. There have been many obstacles, sometimes the farmers were set back on their heels, always they have moved forward again.

The farmers of today face the future with confidence and unafraid.

Some exact dates given in this article may slightly be in error.

So ends the agricultural story as witnessed and experienced by the writer through the years 1911 to 1950.



**Farm Power, 1905.
(J. H. Riesen)**



The same farm 1950 (J. H. Riesen)

MEMOIRS OF J. H. RIESEN

A short sketch of some of the early settlers in Twp. 34 - 3, 18, two townships south of Watson.

The experience of those early days were very interesting and enjoyable. If I could write them as they appeared to me they might be interesting to others as well as to the writer.

The thought of going to a new district to be the first one there, to build a shack and turn over the virgin soil has always interested me. When we settled we indeed were the first in the township. No sign of habitation, no roads, yes, no tracks even except the ones the surveyors made.

This district looked best to us. Nice level land, fairly clear, abundant grass, fire wood not far away looked good. And just across the road allowance on the section to the East was a line drawn on the map. That was to be in a few years a Railroad to Hudson Bay. Alas, the line is still on the old map but no Railroad to Hudson Bay. We spent the best years of our life. There is where our children were born, went to school, grew to man and womanhood.

Before we selected our homesteads we did a lot of driving looking for just the location we wanted. Some one hundred and fifty miles to the S. W. of Davidson, was our starting point by team. In the spring of 1904 this country did not look as it does now. The winter of 1903-1904 had been a very long and cold one with an abnormal amount of snow and a late spring left the land very wet, the sloughs full of water and bog holes. All this made travel without roads slow and almost treacherous at times. Again and again the driver would shout jump. It was then our duty to jump and push to get our rig through the bad place. Why we did not catch a deathly cold, I don't know, unless it was because we absorbed plenty of sunshine and breathed fresh air.

The first real obstacle was the Wolverine River. It was a narrow fast flowing, deep river at that time. We had to detour about eight miles south or cross without a bridge. Once we tried to cross. The horses went in deeper than we had expected. The wagon plunged after, pushed the team of horses against the opposite side but could not climb the steep bank. The horses had to be unhitched taken out singly. Meanwhile a lot of our supplies went down the river.

The next bad place was Devils Lake, with very steep banks. We did not know if we should hobble the horses so they could not go so fast or should we chain the wheels together. That is what we did and got down without any further difficulty. Again we met trouble when we hit the Wolverine, now a dry ravine, but then a wide, deep, flowing River. It looked too dangerous to cross so we went north hoping to find a better crossing, after miles of travel it looked better. We sent a saddle horse across. It had to swim a long way, too far to venture across with wagons. So we went on and found a place that really looked much better. This time a team and a light wagon, the most of the weight was put on other wagons, went across. Wagon and team swam across. We did have along a long rope and managed to throw it across as we sang "Throw out the Life Line." So all the rest of us were pulled across. The trip was not exactly a joy ride but a whole it was a pleasure.

During all these miles we saw only very few settlers. The land is now practically all settled. Towns have sprung up. Watrous, Lanigan, Jansen, Drake and Lockwood in the south. Watson to Humboldt to the north.

We still remember the crossing of the Iron Spring Creek just south of the old Spaberg place. No bridge. The fjord did not seem so good.

We had a minister and a Senator from Nebraska with us. East of the bridge was a plank some six feet above water. So the two men decided to walk across. The minister, tall and very slim, went first. Good luck. He experienced no difficulty. The Senator being a very large and heavy man with not to steady nerve got shaky, so did the plank. He finally made the crossing safely on hands and knees. I see the fat old gentleman still as he crossed on the shaky plank. While camping on the northside of Lake Manitou, two of the boys thought it was time for a good headwash. So with a bar of laundry soap they went at it. You can imagine the result. The lake water and soap do not work very well together. The hair stuck together as though they had been tarred. It took days of washing in good snow water to make them managable.

Who is a pioneer? A trailblazer. One who goes before removing obstacles preparing the way for others to follow.

Then the pioneers did not only work for themselves but also for the coming generations. A wonderful opportunity. Those coming first built up for those who followed. Shaping the future though they knew not of it.

The pioneer days were really very pleasant days. Did we plan for the future as we should have? We must confess, no. So many in the district planned to stay a few years and go on to better places, or back where they came from. Some soon left, others stayed and fought on till age or health forced a retreat.

No doubt many would do differently could they do it again. Our chance is gone. The houses were all of the cheapest kind. There was a good reason. There were no trees planted and no effort made to prepare a place for trees. The district lacked all appearance of prominence.

Reverend Mr. Leitch came in 1906. Mr. Leitch filed on a homestead and made his living farming. He was a very fine man. We have heard many better speakers but never met a finer man. In 1918 during the flu epidemic he went from house to house, and visited the sick, doing the chores, kept the house warm, carried blankets to those that needed them and looked after their spiritual wants. He was a good Samaritan. He did not preach for money as we hear so often. I am sure the collections amounted to very little. He left in the twenties for Edmonton. He will always be remembered as a kind old gentleman. He conducted church services in the early days. Started a school. Baptized the babies and buried the dead. He made his rounds in fair weather, and fowl. In the summer heat or at forty degrees below zero. Services were held in the small farm shacks. First at Fred Watts and later at Riesen's then in the Ardath, (Now Sproule) school.

The most of the settlers were young people with growing families and with very little or no money. There was plenty of Hope for the future. More sod would be turned and brought under cultivation. One lone scrub cow soon would be a herd of well bred cattle. Yes, our families too would grow, and they did. We did have a fine lot of children in time, and in not so long a time. Now they are scattered all over the continent. Our houses too grew larger and more modern. Our Aircastle has largely crumbled. The boat with a thousand masts that left the shore has never returned. We will be thankful if instead a little boat will safely land in the safe harbor.

None of the early settlers ever got very rich here. But we did have the satisfaction to have played our part in opening a new country.

Index

Agricultural Society	85	Lampard, Robert	34
Agricultural Story	101	Lockinger, Jos.	72
Auchstaetter, Jacob	23	McCloud Outfit	81
Bailey, W. H.	74	McNab, Robert	39
Bartsch, Ant.	52	McNab, Wm.	39
Bates, W. F.	10	Mills, Robert	47
Behiels, Edw.	69	Molle, Louis	40
Bettin, Aug.	68	Monsebroten, G.	33
Bettin, John	68	Montgomery, Robert	34
Biggs, E. A.	75	Montgomery, Wm.	34
Bohnen, George	67	Murray, Donald	35
Bohnen, Hub.	67	Nabseth, Arne	67
Bohnen, Mrs. Peter	42	Neal, E.	17
Brager, Ole	72	Palms, John	76
Braget, Carl	76	Parish, Wm. R.	37
Braget, Conrad	76	Pastl, Jos.	77
Burdick, C. J.	65	Peterman, J. H.	79
Bustin, Ant.	75	Putnam, ...	78
Byers, Allan	66	Riesen, J. H.	28
Can. Bank of Commerce	82	Sacred Heart Parish	97
Dahl, J. K.	33	Schindler, T. F.	62
Dale, Nels	74	Smart, W. T.	24
Dennis, A. J.	31	Smith, J. L.	44
Deschryver, Peter	73	Sommer, John	75
Dickson, Rob.	35	Sommer, Seb.	75
Doukhobors	80	Spaberk, P. O.	65
East, Grant	31	Sproule, George	37
Fairbanks, S. H.	11	Sproule, W. H.	68
Fetters	59	Steinke, J. S.	40
Foster, Bros	30	Stewart, Andrew	34
Fuerstenberg, Adam	53	Sullivan, Peter	73
Geyer, Anton	51	Ukrainian Settlers	80
Gierl, John	76	Veterans, ...	92
Gormican, T. J.	62	Vossen, Frank J.	69
Gourley, David	71	Vossen, John	69
Green, H. A.	38	Waelte, Otto H.	67
Gregory, Bros	12	Walby, Jos.	77
Gregory, Gordon B.	14	Walby, Louis	77
Hamers, John	66	Watson Board of Trade	89
Hetland, John	72	Watson Union Hosp.	87
Hinderks, F. A.	53	Watson Witness	88
Howe, John	64	Weber, F. J.	35
Hufnagel, A. E.	63	Wenschlag, Emil	76
Hyde, Harry	66	Wickenhauser, Bros	32
Kiefer, J. P.	36	Wilkes, J. H.	60
Ketchen, Alex	37	Winand, Peter	77
King George Hotel	83	Wolch's Store	86
Knafelc, Leo	52		



